

Theme

HOPE IN JESUS

The Alpha and the Omega

Women's Theme 2022 Presbyterian Church of Wales • Dorcas Programme

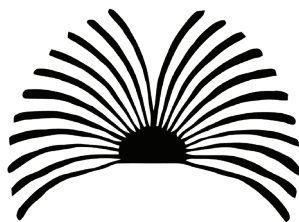
I am the

Alpha and the Omega,

the Beginning and the End.

REVELATION 22.13





CYHOEDDIADAU'R
GAIR



The Presbyterian Church of Wales
The Light of Life

The Women's Sub-Committee of The Presbyterian Church of Wales

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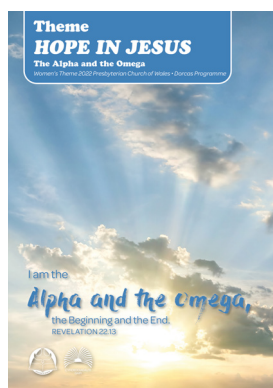
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Welcome

Introduction to the Resource Book

Someone once commented that the wonderful thing about the Gospel message is that it is simple enough for a child to understand, and yet deep enough that not even the cleverest of theologians can ever plumb its depths. I thought of that, when I first saw the theme for this coming year, Hope in Jesus - I am the Alpha and the Omega.



I thought back to times in our Mother and Toddler group in Tabernacle, Penclawdd, when we would sing with the babies, 'Jesus loves me, this I know, For the Bible tells me so'. This is a message that even a child can understand, and yet in our theme for this year, we have deep truths to explore as we think about Jesus as the Alpha and the Omega.

So it is a privilege for me, on behalf of the Women's Sub-Committee, to write the introduction to this new Theme Book. There is surely no greater message that we can share with all of our friends and neighbours, than the fact that there is hope in Jesus. He is the beginning and the end, He knows the 'big picture' and He is with us in every small detail of our lives.

I know that everyone who has contributed to the contents of this book have worked hard to provide us with resources and information which we can share with others. I hope that in looking through the book you will find lots of interesting information and useful resources to use personally and in your church.

We have been through very trying times during this last two years. Many of us have missed the fellowship of meeting with one another in our churches. Some of us have lost a bit of confidence in going out and getting involved in activities. One of the good things of recent months of course is that we have been able to see one another on Zoom, especially in the Women's Bible Studies which have been such an encouragement. As we look forward to better times, and increased opportunities to spread the best news in the world, whatever is happening around us, it is a blessing to know there is 'hope in Jesus'.

Christine Hodgins

Chair of Women's Sub-Committee



Nicola Roylance's testimony

Growing up, my sister was always the brainy one. She was always top of her class and was always destined for a career in a more scientific field. It is a standing joke in our family that when my daughter was a baby, my sister would bore her to sleep with tales from her job. Who would have guessed that 12 years later, we would be constantly texting her to ask if there was any news in her field as her lab was thrown right into the centre of dealing with a global pandemic.

While my sister was racking up the overtime trying to process the ever-increasing Covid-19 tests arriving at her lab, I suddenly found myself unable to do my job as churches and schools around the country closed in response to a global lockdown.

Our family dynamic changed almost overnight. Chris, my husband, was at home trying to reassure his now furloughed staff; I was frantically googling "home-schooling resources suitable for a global pandemic"; Seren, my eldest, was blocking up the Wi-Fi, desperately trying to maintain the social life of a pre-teen; Dylan, my youngest, spent his time trying to convince me that pyjamas were the fashion choice of a pandemic, and my dog, Luna, was living her best life now we were all home, all of the time!

I suddenly went from dashing here, there, and everywhere, with clubs in church, assemblies and clubs in schools, extracurricular clubs with the kids, to nothing. And it was a hard adjustment. Being still is not a gift I have. I mean, I run ultra-marathons for fun! I find it extremely hard not to be doing something.

So, I adjusted, I adapted, and I thought outside the box. I started filming my assemblies to send to schools, I recorded some Bible stories for teachers to use in their RE lessons, and as the restrictions eased slightly, I was asked to get involved with setting up an online expression of church called The Sanctuary. All these things are completely out of my comfort zone and are things I would never have considered doing had the situation been different.



Now, hindsight is a wonderful thing and looking back I can so clearly see God telling me 'Be still. Stop rushing around being busy and be fruitful for my kingdom.' The assemblies and lessons I recorded have reached so many more children than I could ever have attempted in real life. Teachers were sharing them among other teacher friends, meaning schools I would not have physically visited have also benefitted from them and the content put out online by The Sanctuary has been watched by thousands.

In between the homemade bread and the daily mental health walks, God stayed by my side. He gave me a whole new way of looking at my ministry. He gave me the confidence to step out of my comfort zone and He showed me the fruit that can come from being still, knowing that He is God and trusting in Him.

Nicola works for the South East Wales Presbytery as a children and youth worker.



Gwenith Jones's testimony

During my college days I attended a weekend retreat; and through the preaching I heard there, I experienced the word of God talking to me personally. It was there that I became a Christian, experiencing God's grace and heavenly peace, which comes from knowing Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour.

Over the years, there have been times of blessings but also times when I failed to grow in faith as I ought to have done, occasions when I did not lean on God's promises. But despite all my failings I give thanks that Jesus Christ is always the same, as it says in the well-known verse in Hebrews 13:8: 'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever'. He is the One, that has preserved my faith and loved me faithfully through all my life challenges and circumstances.

That has also been my experience throughout the duration of Covid-19 pandemic period. Despite all the uneasy anxieties of such days, I had time, and a valuable store of provisions, to focus on and to deepen my relationship with Jesus Christ.

Our chapel held weekly services, The Bible Course sessions and a *Seiat* (church fellowship meeting) on Zoom; and the members presented treasured verses

on our group's Facebook page. An opportunity arose for me to join with the Women's Bible studies, 'Come to the Table'. I became aware of the abundance of Scriptural resources and sermons that could be accessed on the internet and was so appreciative of their influence on my faith. I was led to read and to study the Bible more regularly and to seek God in prayer.

One evening whilst studying Psalm 121, I was touched by the second part of its fifth verse:

'The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand'.

How delightful it is to be reminded that God is as close to us as a shadow. Reminding myself of this one verse gives me strength and courage on challenging days; and gives me a cause to smile when walking outside on a sunny day!

Gwenith lives in Mold and worships at Bethesda Chapel. She has been a faithful member of the Zoom Bible Studies over the past year.





Hannah Tumelty's testimony



I was brought up in a religious home, and the chapel was central to the family. We attended Capel Bethania in Ferryside, South Carmarthenshire. After my brother had taught me how to ride a bicycle, it was decided that I would have to attend Sunday School and the evening service every Sunday and occasionally I had to attend the Sunday morning service too. If there was no evening service, our grandmother would insist that the chapel would then hold a 'children's meeting' with all her own grandchildren participating in that service.

After I'd started my career as a nurse in Cardiff, I stopped attending chapel. I fell in love with my husband, we got married in Bethania Chapel in Ferryside, 50 years ago. We were greatly blessed with two delightful sons, and subsequently with two loving daughters-in-law and three grandsons that are worth the world to us. During those years I only went to chapel for weddings or funerals.

Ten years ago I was working with a nurse whose name was Pam. She offered to pray for my aching back to be soothed or even healed. To tell the truth, I thought she was bonkers, but I didn't want her to think I was rude, so I agreed, and Pam prayed. This sparked my interest to look into matters that I hadn't thought about for many years. Pam asked me if I was a Christian, and of course I replied that I was. She then asked me whether or not I had asked Jesus to come into my heart. I had no idea at all what she was talking about. After much discussion, thought and reading John's Gospel over the following weeks, I did eventually ask Jesus to come into my heart. Praise God! What followed was an experience that brought me such freedom, joy, happiness, heavenly peace and a hope which is impossible to describe. To quote the words of Rufus H. McDaniel's well-known hymn: "What a wonderful change in my life has been wrought, since Jesus came into my heart."

Three years after repenting and receiving Jesus as my Lord and Saviour, I was baptised in Salem, the Baptist Chapel at Ferryside. Thanks to Eirian, Wil (who has by now gone to be at home with the Lord) and Juliet, for supporting me then, and for continuing to do so, to bring me to where I am today. I remained a member of the congregation at the Salem Chapel but am now a member at the Horeb Chapel at Mynydd-y-Garreg (in Carmarthenshire), as the Bethania congregation has by now merged with the congregation at Capel Horeb.

The last two years have been a huge challenge to all of us. The Welsh expression 'Gofid y Covid' (meaning: anxiety associated with Covid) has been foremost in everyone's mind, and we've observed the whole world practically decline into chaos. There have been so many tears, so much apprehension, so much suffering, grief and sorrow. What struck me, as I'm sure it did everyone else, was how heart-breaking it has been to see parents unable to attend their own child's funeral, and people unable to be with a member of their family while they faced their final hours. Not being able to see members of one's family face-to-face, and have a 'cwtsh' (a Welsh expression for a cuddle), was terribly hard to bear; but then to learn that they were all healthy and happy would bring us such relief and joy.

We are still wondering when we will next be able to see our son and his wife who live in Australia - though our God knows, and he is the One at the helm of our lives' destinies. Not being able to meet with other Christians to worship our Lord Jesus left an empty vacuum in our hearts. But thanks be to God for the latest technology! I've met so many lovely people on 'Zoom.' I would very much like to thank everyone who has taken part to set up, organise and run the many worship meetings, Bible studies and prayer meetings.

Although these virtual meetings were very good it's wonderful to be back with people face to face and be able to join together in worship as a congregation. The presence of Jesus in my life has kept me going, particularly through the difficult times we've experienced. To know that he loves me, just as I am, full of sin, fills me with joy and peace. I so regret when I forget about him, when everyday cares and family matters distract me too much. I'm aware that I don't pray sufficiently often, that I don't love him enough, and that I don't read his Word frequently enough. Nevertheless, through all this I know that I can rest in his presence. As Jesus himself said (Matthew 28:20), "... and lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age." How amazing!

Hannah lives in Ferryside, near Carmarthen and is a member in Horeb, Mynydd-y-Garreg. Hannah has been a faithful member of the Zoom Bible studies.

Anita Day's testimony

I'd always gone to Sunday School, one of the local school teachers would take me. I went until I was 14 when I met my husband, and I didn't go to church then until we got married. My husband's aunty was a Jehovah's Witness (JW) and after we got married I started to listen to her and I bought a Jehovah Bible. My neighbours were also Jehovah's Witnesses and I would go to their house to study the JW Bible and Book of Truth. I couldn't remember hearing about Jehovah – just Jesus – in my Sunday school days and one day I decided to go back to chapel to find out more.

The Sunday I went was Harvest and the preacher was the well known Evangelist, Idris Davies. At one point in his sermon he spoke about people staying in bed on Sunday morning reading the News of the World. I slunk down in my seat, wondering how he knew that's what I did! At the end of the Service I went to speak to Mr Davies and I told him that I hadn't been to chapel for a long time and that it was me he was talking about reading the newspaper in bed on Sunday morning! He took me into the side room and explained the Gospel to me. He gave me a leaflet the 7 Ps that explained what it meant to be a Christian, and I still have it. I stopped going to the Jehovah's Witness and none of my friends in the Jehovah's wanted anything to do with me now I was a Christian. That was hard.

I started to attend Reach out Trust prayer meetings for people who had left the Jehovah's Witnesses and that helped me alot. There weren't any people my age in the chapel but there were some very special people who looked after me and helped me in my faith. One of those was Charlie Shivers. People in the village called him Moses because he was a real man of God. Another true friend was Bill Steed who was the minister in Sandfields, Port Talbot.

Things have changed so much over the years. At one time there were 7 chapels in the village and we had over 100 children coming to Sunday school but now we are the only chapel that's open. We have a weekly Bible study with a minister from a nearby village and a weekly coffee morning for fellowship. We know that God has his hand on us. I attend a prayer meeting in another church in a nearby town when I can and a ladies meeting in another church where there's a Ladies team, which has younger ladies too. One of the things that has helped me



during Covid is using my ipad to follow posts from the Ladies team. They post verses and meditations every day. Another thing that has given me strength is listening to hymns on youtube – especially from the Salvation army in Canada! But the most encouragement I've had is from my faithful friends in chapel. We kept in touch by phoning each other, chatting on the doorstep and in each others gardens when we were allowed. I'm so grateful that I have a very good friend who I phone every night and we discuss what we've read in our *Daily Bread* readings – but sometimes we get so late we're nearly nodding off! Of course, our Bible studies on Zoom with Carys and Sarah have been wonderful.

We're still hopeful that people will come back to the Lord – that perhaps Covid will make people turn to God – our hope and prayer is that God will move. We know that God is good all of the time and he gives us strength to serve him and people to help us.

Anita is one of the ladies who's been attending the English Bibles studies on Zoom. She lives in Blaengwynfi and attends Villiers Road church.

SERVICE

Hope in Jesus:

I am the Alpha and the Omega

Service prepared by Christine Hodgins and others

WELCOME

The poet Emily Dickinson once wrote:

*"Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul
and sings the tune without the words and never stops at
all."*

Have you felt like singing over the last few years?
After so much fear and uncertainty we might have
expected to have forgotten the words of hope.

And yet, lots of us have found that somehow, we kept
singing and never stopped at all.

Many Christians across Wales and the wider world
have actually found they have come closer to Jesus
and as they have done so have found they have more
hope.

In this service we are trying to think about what it
means to have a certain and sure hope in Jesus.

HYMN 1

[SEE LIST OF HYMNS AT THE END OF THE SERVICE & P.30](#)

REFLECTION 1

Imagine being Sir Ian McKellen.

He is a world famous actor, star of *The Lord of the
Rings* and renowned for being a great Shakespearean
actor.

Recently he was asked to take part in a play for
charity. He would be playing a detective solving
a mystery but, and here is the surprising part, he
would not be given any lines to learn or be told the
plot. Instead, he would have to work out what was
happening, as the play was developing!

That's staggering, isn't it? Imagine being in the
middle of something strange and new, with only a
limited understanding of what you were doing and
with actors and audience all around you, some of
them surely hoping you would fail.

Every Christian knows that feeling. The Bible says
that when we become a Christian, we move from
darkness to light which is a dramatic change. New
Christians might feel that they have suddenly joined
a whole new world that they don't understand, with
people behaving in ways that are completely alien to
them.

Thankfully we don't need to feel like that for long
and the Book of Revelation tells us why.

READING [Revelation 1: 4 - 8](#)

REFLECTION 2

John understands that life can sometimes feel like
we've been dropped into the middle of a play. We're
not sure what's going on, we don't know how we
got here or what our end will be. We see wars and
diseases and family breakdown and suffering, and we
wonder what on earth is going on.

But John wants to reassure us that someone is
directing the play. That's why he calls Jesus the
Alpha and the Omega. These are the first and last
letters of the Greek alphabet. John wants us to see
that Jesus was there at the very beginning and that
he has written the script so he knows what's been
happening and how things will turn out.

Jesus is the first and the last, the beginning and the
end. He was here at creation, and he will come again
in the clouds at the end of time.



When Sir Ian McKellan was asked to act in that strange play, he was not told the plot. However, he did have an earpiece in and someone was reading him lines to help him through the play. One of the reasons we have hope in Jesus is because we know he knows the lines. He has created the world, he has saved the world, and he will come again to the world.

A PRAYER OF ADORATION

Lord God, we come to you today to worship you and to ask for your blessing as we meet together.

We thank you that you are willing to welcome us and that we find our hope in you.

We are living in a world which is always changing, and so we thank you that in a world of change, Christ and his word always remain the same. You have given us the Lord Jesus to be our certainty. He is the Alpha and the Omega.

All our blessings come from you, for you have drawn us to yourself and shown your love for us.

Loving God who knows all the dark secrets of our hearts, may the light of your forgiveness shine in us that we might be cleansed and pure.

Amen

HYMN 2

REFLECTION 3

Did the passage we read in Revelation surprise you?

John tells us that it is Jesus, who was present at creation, who will also be the focus of attention at the end of the world.

John tells us that he will be unmissable, every eye will see him, and that he will provoke a reaction in everyone, "all will mourn because of him".

How are we meant to feel about someone who is the Alpha and the Omega, the one who was and is and is to come? How are we to feel about the "Almighty"?

Well, the same man who wrote these words also tells us a story. In John's Gospel, chapter 4 we read about Jesus meeting a woman at a well.

DIALOGUE

NARRATOR *Jesus left Judea and started for Galilee again. This time he had to go through Samaria. He stopped near the field that Jacob had long ago given to his son Joseph.*

The well that Jacob had dug was still there, and Jesus sat down beside it because he was tired from traveling. It was noon, and after Jesus' disciples had gone into town to buy some food, a Samaritan woman came to draw water from the well.

JESUS *Would you please give me a drink of water?*

WOMAN *You're a Jew and I'm a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink of water when Jews and Samaritans won't have anything to do with each other?*

JESUS *You don't know what God wants to give you, or who is asking you for a drink. If you did, you would ask me for the water that gives life.*

WOMAN *Sir, you don't even have a bucket! Where are you going to get this life-giving water?*

JESUS *Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again. But no one who drinks the water I give will ever be thirsty again. The water I give is like a flowing fountain that gives eternal life."*

REFLECTION 4

Isn't that a beautiful promise?

Isn't it wonderful that Jesus cared so much about that woman?

Why do we hope in Jesus? Because he cares about our needs.

It doesn't matter what we have been through he cares about us.

Why do we hope in Jesus?

Because he can do something about our needs.

It doesn't matter how hopeless things feel, he can do something to meet our deepest needs and quench our most terrible thirst.



Mez McConnell is a Christian minister who works in a church near Glasgow. He lives amongst some of the deprived people in Europe and tries to bring Jesus, the living water, to them. In his book *The Least, The Last and the Lost*, he includes the experience of one young woman, Jane, who lives near him.

JANE'S STORY

"My husband had an affair and left me with the children and all the debts. We didn't have a lot of debt, but when you don't have anything and have no hope of ever finding the money, £6000 is a crushing amount. I was working, but suddenly there was only one wage and the same amount of bills. Most months we barely made it to the next payday.

One time, I can't even remember why, there must've been an extra bill, I had nothing — no milk or bread. It was so bad that I even asked my ex for money. He left me so humiliated that the £50 he gave me wasn't worth the price of my self-respect. I never asked him for anything again.

Things began to get on top of me and I turned to the doctors for antidepressants. I could barely drag myself out of bed in the mornings and it was a struggle to get the children ready for school. I lost my job and had to go on full-time benefits. It was just so embarrassing. I never planned this for my life but now I'm trapped, I'm trapped and there is no way out. I don't want to live like this anymore. And I don't want my children growing up like this struggling to get by from week to week. What else can I do?"

REFLECTION 5

Here is a woman who is deeply thirsty. She is at the end of her tether and can't see a way out for her or her children. There will be people like this who live near you. Perhaps you know someone who feels like this or perhaps if you're honest you feel like it yourself.

There is hope in Jesus. Let us pray that people like Jane find Jesus and receive the living water.

Let us pray that we might be motivated to share this living water with people like Jane.

PRAYER

Let us pray

Loving God

We bring to you the needs of others, and we ask that you would look in mercy upon our world.

We ask that you would save those in need, by your living water.

We remember those who are hungry, or in pain, abused or living in fear.

May we be used to teach others that there is hope in Jesus.

May we be salt and light wherever we go, seeking opportunities to bring the good news of the gospel to those living in darkness.

You showed us how to live, through the words, life and death of your Son.

Grant us grace that we may follow Him and unite to proclaim your word to those around us.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord

Amen

HYMN 3

READING Revelation 21

REFLECTION 6

In 2010 there was great mourning in Germany when Paul the Octopus died.

Paul had lived in an aquarium in Germany at the time of the World Cup. He became famous when he correctly predicted seven of Germany's matches in the 2010 World Cup. He also correctly chose Spain as the winner of the World Cup final.

Paul the octopus 'predicted' these results by swimming to one of two flags in his tank. It was a good joke, but nobody seriously believed he was telling the future, because nobody can really do that.



Or almost nobody!

In our reading John tells us with complete confidence that Jesus has won, that he has written the final chapter just like he wrote the first. And that he will come back to earth again.

That's something to give you hope.

But what about those final words. The ones about evildoers? They don't seem to fit into pretty pictures about heavenly hope. Do they help us hope in Jesus?

Yes! Don't we need to know that cruelty and wickedness will be punished?

Don't we need to know that the story will have a happy and glorious ending?

Right now, our brothers and sisters in other parts of the country are suffering. They know persecution, imprisonment, rape, torture, and death. They know what it is to be abused, what it is to live in poverty.

They need to know that this story has a happy ending.

Let us pray for them.

Let us pray a prayer of thanksgiving that in this instance we know the future.

We know that the Alpha is also the Omega.

We know what it is to Hope in Christ.

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

Let us pray

We thank you that we know your love in our hearts.
Your always care for us. You know our weaknesses
and you help us in our frailty.

Response: *When we fall you lift us*

When we fail you restore us.

When we are wounded you nurse us

When we grieve you weep with us.

We pray for our country.

God bless our land and those who rule over us.

Response: *Where there is war we pray for peace.*

*Where there is crime and corruption we pray for integrity
and justice.*

*Where there is poverty we pray for fairness and
generosity.*

*Where there is disease and death we pray for healing and
comfort.*

We pray for our churches, that we may be salt and
light in our communities.

May we reach out to those who need you, May your
Holy Spirit work in the hearts of those around us.

Response: *O Lord revive our churches that the light of
the gospel might shine brightly.*

*We give ourselves to your service and pray that you
would use us for your glory.*

In Jesus name we pray,

Amen

REFLECTION 7

It is said that a person needs just three things to
be truly happy in this world: someone to love,
something to do, and something to hope for.

In Jesus, we have someone to love: and someone who
loves us.

We have something to do: share the good news of the
water of life with our friends and neighbours.

We have something to hope for: the return of Jesus,
our Alpha and Omega.

Hymn 4

BENEDICTION

The Lord Jesus has said: It is done.

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and
the End.

To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the
spring of the water of life.

May we, and all those we love,

Know the nature and power of these words,

Now and forevermore. Amen.



Suggested hymns:

God whose Almighty word

Light of the world

Jesus thou joy of loving hearts

Love divine all loves excelling

Who can cheer the heart like Jesus

Blessed Assurance Jesus is mine

Service prepared by Christine Hodgins,
Jonathan Hodgins and Angela Bebbington

I am the

Alpha and the Omega,
the Beginning and the End.
REVELATION 22.13

SEEDS OF HOPE

CHRISTIAN AID APPEAL



**cymorth
cristnogol**

I'd like to send everyone my best wishes as we endeavour to raise awareness and funds for **Climate Justice** in our five-year appeal for Christian Aid. As women in the denomination we have the privilege of giving, acting and praying together for this special work, and it is important that we remember that it is women who are hardest affected by climate change. But we rejoice that there are signs of hope. One instance is the Siligi women's group in Songa village, Kenya, where the women have come together and formed a self-help group as they face the current crisis. This group is also a perfect example of how the local partners of Christian Aid can make a difference in this huge battle against climate change, and also how we as women of the Presbyterian Church of Wales can stand in solidarity with them – and all those suffering the effects of this crisis – in our Christian Aid appeal 'Seeds of Hope'.

Jennifer Gudere is chair of the Siligi Women's Group. This is how Jennifer remembers how the weather there has changed: 'In the past, we had a lot of rain in the rainy season. The beans were glittering, we knew we would have a long or short rainfall. Once

December came, so did the rain, and again in August. In April we prepared our fields, and got them ready, because we knew the rain was close.'

But as the drought increases and the resources needed for sustaining life diminish, life becomes much more difficult. One consequence of this shortfall is the increase in conflicts between resource-desperate communities. In her village, families have lost fathers to this conflict, especially during the dry season, as men fight over water and pasture. When the guns are silenced, children have lost fathers and mothers have lost sons.

In the group not only do they share each other's emotional burdens, they also share some of the food they have. 'Whenever we go to the group meetings we leave with a sack of things on our back, such as food for us to take home to our children. That is the importance of the group.'

But the group have also been trained for modern farming techniques which they then share with the rest of the community. Through PACIDA, local



partners of Christian Aid, they were trained in ‘smart agriculture’, learning techniques that will enable food to be grown even in the dry season. They have also learned about greenhouse technology, which extends the growing season for them, and have been taught about different seeds which are more resilient to drought.

Safia Galgallo is a poultry farmer, and her farm is thriving. Her life is an example of what is possible even in an extremely challenging situation. Married and a mother of five children, she also cares for four other children and her mother-in-law. Life has been very hard for her. She and her family left the desert region of the Chalbi to build a better life for themselves in a village near Marsabit. But because of violent clashes there they had to move a second time.

Her life improved when she joined the Usafi Women’s Group – another group that receives support from Christian Aid. With the financial support of the group, her poultry business grew. It now has three chicken coops and over 500 chicks. ‘The business is booming,’ she says, ‘and it helps me take care of my family. Being in the group is a blessing for me, and I think that people who don’t belong to it have a lot more problems. For example, they have to go a long distance to carry water and the children have no food. My business wouldn’t have thrived without the group.’

With climate change continuing to affect the weather, the family continues to face challenges.

‘Lack of water is the biggest challenge for me,’ Safia said. ‘We used to go to collect water near the town, but it was very hectic. Through the group we have bought a tank and when it rains it collects the water.’

We pray with Jennifer, Safia and all the Kenyan women facing the horrific challenges of climate change. Here are a few prayer points for you to consider.

- We pray for peace in these communities. We remember that climate change can create discord in communities.
- We pray for the dignity of Jennifer, Safia and all women affected by climate justice.
- We pray that we too will come to understand and discern our own responsibility here in Wales in the light of climate change in our world, and particularly in Kenya.
- We pray that the ‘Seeds of Hope’ Appeal will reflect the perfect love of Jesus Christ and that through us others will know and discern God’s love better.

Nan Powell-Davies



BIBLE STUDIES

Women who met Jesus

In January 2021 the Women's Sub-committee began to hold virtual Bible studies, Come to the Table, because of the social restrictions we faced under Covid-19.

It was obvious that the Sub-committee's chosen theme for the year, Jesus the Good Shepherd, would be very appropriate. Sarah (Morris) had already prepared a series of Bible studies on Psalm 23 for the 2020 Theme book, so we

naturally turned to this well-known Psalm, knowing we would find much-needed comfort whilst living through the pandemic.

Invitations went out to join us on Zoom and four sessions were initially held every fortnight – three Welsh language sessions (North and South) and one English language session. During the first week 70 women joined the studies. The fellowship we've had has been especially valuable as we've

focused on God's word and then spent time in small discussion groups. Other series then followed: Women who met Jesus; Living in hope: Women of the Old Testament, and the Lord's Prayer.

If you would like to join the Bible studies and would like more information, contact Eirian Roberts: eirian.roberts@ebcpcw.cymru

Here are the accounts of 6 women and a young girl who had the privilege of meeting Jesus face to face and who experienced his tender love meeting their deepest needs. Each of the stories reveal so much of Jesus' ability and love as a man but also as the Lord who knew their personal challenges and could meet them in a miraculous way. Their stories encourage us to seek to know Jesus in this way ourselves.

STUDY 1:

JESUS, THE MESSIAH AND THE WOMAN FROM SAMARIA

Background information

Life for women in the first century in Israel was different in many ways to our lives today. Keeping the home and the family was a woman's full-time job – and there were no gadgets to make life easy. In theory, women were held in high regard, but in practice this wasn't always true and her life was almost entirely spent in the family sphere.

A woman would only work outside the home if she had no other means to support herself. She wasn't

taught to read (women weren't required to study the Torah so had no need to read), wasn't allowed to testify in court because their testimony wasn't trusted, was only allowed to enter the Women's court in the Temple and wasn't allowed to participate in public prayer.

One reason for this attitude to women was the influence of Greek thought on the Rabbis who interpreted the Torah – the first 5 books of the Jewish Scripture, the Five books of Moses.



In the light of this, Jesus' treatment of women was remarkable – he talked to women, taught women, allowed them to follow him and he healed women.

Read: John 4:16

Jesus had been teaching in Judea but had decided to go back to Galilee. To get there Jesus and his disciples would have had to travel through Samaria.

At this time, most Jews would avoid travelling through Samaria because there was such hatred between the Jews and the Samaritans. The schism between them had existed for around 700 years and they worshipped in different temples and had different scriptures. The Jews considered the Samaritans to be unclean because they had allowed marriage with people of other nations and had adopted some rituals from their pagan religions.

But John, the author of this account, tells us that Jesus HAD to go through Samaria because as we'll see there was someone that Jesus wanted to meet in Sychar.

1. What did Jesus do when they got to Sychar? Verse 6.

Jesus was tired from the journey. This reminds us that Jesus experienced hunger, thirst, tiredness – all the physical and emotional needs that we experience because he was fully human.

Read verses 7-9

2. Jesus asks a woman for a drink. Why is she surprised? Verse 9

- I am a Samaritan – we've already noted the hatred that existed between the Jews and Samaritans
- I am a woman – men wouldn't speak to women who were not their wives or family members
- Note also: Jesus was a Rabbi and Rabbis certainly would not speak to women – AND IN PUBLIC where anyone could see them

Read verses 10-15

3. Why is the water that Jesus offers her better than the water from the well? Verses 10, 13, 14

It's living water. Whoever drinks it will never be thirsty again. It will give eternal life.

Water is often used in the Bible as a symbol of spiritual life and the Holy Spirit.

4. How does the woman respond? Verse 15

Do you think she understands what Jesus is offering her? Probably not. But she does like the idea of not having to go to the well every day to get water and so wants to continue this conversation.

Read verses 16-18

5. What does Jesus tell her to do and what is her answer? Verses 16-18

Her reply explains why she was at the well on her own at midday. The women would usually go to a well early in the day when it was cooler. Was she trying to avoid them, their stares and dislike?

- Her reply also suggests she was a woman who knew great pain. We aren't told if some of her previous husbands had died or if she had been divorced by 5 men (divorce at this time was only done by the husband and one school of Rabbinic thought at this time allowed divorce for minor problems, like burning the bread!).
- We also realise she lived in shame – the shame of living with a man who was not her husband.

Note: Jesus knows all about the woman but he hasn't condemned or criticized her. Amazingly, he has offered her the living water of eternal life.

Read verses 19-24

It seems that the woman is beginning to realise that Jesus is someone with authority and insight. Verse 19. She tries to engage him in a theological discussion about where people should worship God. Verse 20 – *See the footnotes for more detail on this.*



6. What does Jesus say to her?

Verses 21-24

Jesus doesn't brush her off. Rather, he makes a revelation to this woman – that a time has come when people won't have to go to a special place to worship God anymore. Jesus explains a profound truth to this woman, that God wants worshippers who worship in their spirit under the influence of the Holy Spirit, inspired by God's truth rather than ceremonies and rituals.

Read verses 25-26

You can imagine her shrugging her shoulders as if to say: 'This is too difficult for me to understand, I'll have to wait for the Messiah to explain it to me!'

7. What declaration does Jesus make to her? Verse 26

The Jews and the Samaritans were waiting for the Messiah, the one who God had promised would be the Saviour of his people. There had been many prophecies from God that the Messiah would overcome God's enemies, including sin and Satan, and establish God's kingdom on earth.

Not only had Jesus spent time teaching this woman, now he reveals himself to be the one anointed by God to be their Saviour. She is the first person who Jesus tells that he is the Messiah!

If time permits look at some of these verses where Jesus describes his purpose and work:

John 6:38, Luke 19:10, Matthew 13:13, John 10:11, Luke 5:20, Luke 7:48, John 12:45, John 12:46.

Read verses 27-30

8. Why were the disciples surprised when they arrived?

9. What did the woman do having heard Jesus' declaration?

- She forgot her water jar – which is why she was at the well.
- She rushed back to those she was trying to avoid earlier – she forgot her shame.

- She wanted them to meet Jesus too – Come and meet him.

What a change had taken place in the woman. Being with Jesus and hearing Jesus' declaration transformed her and she became the first missionary!

Read verses 39-42

10. How did the Samaritans respond?

They acknowledged Jesus as the Saviour of the World – he was the Saviour not just for the Jews but for the Samaritans too – and for all who believe, irrespective of class, creed or background. The Samaritan woman was used by God to tell the whole town that the Messiah had come.

Points to help us apply this story personally

- When we encounter Jesus, he lifts the burden of sin and shame.
- Knowing who Jesus is – the Messiah/Saviour – transforms us.
- God rejoices when a life is transformed by his grace, and he asks us to reach out to others so they may experience that grace as well.

Footnote

When the Israelites lived in the wilderness they worshipped God in a movable tent, the Tabernacle. God's presence in the Tabernacle was accompanied by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Then, King Solomon built the Temple in Jerusalem and this is where the Jews worshipped God. When Solomon dedicated the Temple God's glory came and filled the Temple – God was there by his Spirit. But not all the people could go into God's presence – the priests and the High Priest represented them and only once a year could the High Priest enter the area of the Temple where God's presence was. Remember that because of the schism between the Jews and the Samaritans the Samaritans had built their own Temple on Mount Gerizim.

STUDY 2:

JESUS THE SAVIOUR AND THE WOMAN FROM CANAAN

Read: Matthew 15:21-29 and Mark 7:24-30

These chapters tell the story of a Syro-Phoenician woman from the land of Canaan who met Jesus when she was facing intense challenges with her young daughter's mental health.

We can only imagine what life was like for her and her family.

Despite the circumstances, she had come in search of Jesus knowing two things; her daughter was in a state of great distress and that Jesus had the power to heal her.

It's interesting to note that as a mother she doesn't ask Jesus for a perspective on the condition or strength to cope with her little daughter's illness. Like all good mums, she wants the best for her child and for her to be healed completely.

Read: Luke 8:1,2. Mark 5:1-4.

This story, as in the case of the Samaritan Woman, comes to light when we consider the fact that Jesus seems to be friendly and happy spending time in the company of both women. Although they weren't Jews, Jesus seems full of admiration for their personal faith in him, as the one who is able to save them from their distress.

Reflect: We see that the Lord Jesus rejoices in building relationships with those who seek Him earnestly.

Read: Psalm 145:18,19

The woman's faith

The story is simply about the faith of the Canaanite woman. We can see that her knowledge is based on the history of her nation with the Jews, as well as God's promises. We do not know exactly how much she knew about Jesus, but she reveals to us her personal faith and conviction that Jesus is the true Messiah.

Location of the story in both gospels

Read: Matthew 14:13,15, 32-35

At this time in their history, circumstances were not easy for Jesus and his disciples. Why was this?

- Objections. Matthew 14:12,13
- Jesus challenges the teachings of the Pharisees. Matthew 15:7-9
- Begin to talk about his death. Matthew 16:21,22
- Meeting the needs of the people of Israel. Matthew 14:13-36

Although Jesus spends a great deal of time teaching the Jews, he also begins to engage a little more with individuals from mixed nationalities from neighbouring countries such as Samaria and Canaan. Some Jews had married with people from other nations but they weren't allowed to worship at Jerusalem.

Matthew's Jewish audience would have been interested to know that Jesus did a miracle for a Canaanite woman, in Gentile land. Jesus had healed Gentiles before but only on Jewish territory.

Considering everything that was happening around them, it's not surprising that Jesus and his disciples needed a break.

Where did they go to for a rather extended holiday?

The Message:

Early on in the story we see the striking contrast in Jesus' life – back in Israel among his own nation, Jesus was trying hard to convince people that he was the Messiah. While he was performing amazing miracles, he was constantly being challenged by the Jews to carry out even more signs to prove that he was the Son of God.

But here in Canaan, in a foreign country, he meets a young mother who was like a breath of fresh air in her firm conviction that he was the Messiah. Jesus



could not persuade her otherwise and accept that his time with her people had not yet come.

Hearing her declaration of faith must have been something wonderful to Jesus after the bitter experiences back in Israel, with people doubting his existence as the long-awaited Saviour.

Reflection: The young Canaanite mother brings to us a wonderful persuasion. She reminds us of the importance to please the Lord by telling him that we believe he is the Son of God and our own personal Saviour.

Read: Matthew 16:16. Hebrews 11:1.

Consider: That Jesus went all the way to Canaan specifically to see this young mother and desired to spend time in her company.

He had likewise gone through Samaria to spend time in the company of the woman at Jacob's well. He seemed to be on a mission to see key individuals who had no social or celebrity status. They shared one thing in common, that they were in great need of deliverance, and Jesus meets them in their weakness and in their faith in him. As a result, they placed their faith in the One who can change circumstances and give them peace, as the Psalmist says.

Read: Psalm 37:4-7

This story tells us that the Lord is not only the essence of love, power, grace and forgiveness, but also a source of joy, smiles and happiness.

Read: Psalm 16:11. Matthew 11:28,29

Consider: In these verses which words did Jesus use to describe himself?

Do we focus enough on these key features in Jesus' personality?

What influence should they have on us and our lives from day to day?

The Story:

As the conversation progresses, Jesus gives the impression that he was unwilling to heal her daughter because she was a Canaanite – from a non-Jewish nation. We then read what seems to be banter between them, before Jesus healed the young girl.

The woman's history: We are not told her name or anything about her family background other than she was Greek and lived in the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon. We can only detect her way of thinking that led to her behaviour with Jesus. Author Max Lukeado, in his book *Ten Women of the Bible*, says of her: 'She came from nowhere and went nowhere. She disappeared like a puff of smoke. But what a lovely puff she was.'

Read: Matthew 15: 21-24

When we first meet the woman, she is shouting in despair at Jesus and his group of disciples saying, 'Take pity on me.' She shouted from behind as if some way from the group. The disciples didn't appreciate her noise, maybe embarrassed because she was a 'foreign woman' to them, but also a Canaanite! Most commentators agree that 'send her away' doesn't mean to send her packing because she is a nuisance. Rather, as they had not seen Jesus turn anyone away that came to him, they meant 'Help her, heal her and then she will go away.'

She claimed nothing for herself. Instead, she perceived Jesus' majesty and politely greets him as 'the Lord' or 'Sir'. Son of David – of royal dynasty, sovereign over her and therefore she pleads her case before her King.

Reflect: The depth of desire for her young daughter's mental well-being resonated with her depth of belief in a great Messiah, who has power over everything.

Read: Psalm 42:6,7

The Scene: Notice where everyone is standing in the scene. She understands that she's not one of them as a group, she is not a Jew, she is inferior to them. Well aware of the ancient rivalry between Jews and the Canaanites. All she can do is cry for mercy from afar before drawing closer and kneeling before Jesus.

God has always been a God of grace. From the beginning, he only asked that his people have faith in him. This is what the woman did depending on Christ wholeheartedly.



Consider:

- Christ was enough for her and so our faith in him is enough for him to hear us.
- A simple faith is the object of God's grace, love and mercy.

Read: Matthew 15:22,23

Jesus' unexpected response to her call for mercy came in silence! Why did Jesus delay in answering her?

She begged him to do the very thing he came to do – to show mercy.

This probably made him smile and draw her further into the dialogue.

We can imagine that Jesus knew that her heart was good, and says smiling to her with his tongue in his cheek,

'Is it not right and fair at the dinner table to feed the pet dogs at the expense of the children?' (Paraphrase)

She is sharp with her reply to him,

'Yes Lord, but your bread is so precious, I'll be happy to eat the crumbs, like the titbits that the pet dogs eat from their owner's tables. Those who own dogs surely feed them.' (Paraphrase)

With delight Jesus answers her back,

'Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.'

Her faith was rewarded.

Consider: This is the second time in Matthew's gospel that the word 'Woman' has been used to show deep affection. When was the other time? John 19:26

Read: Psalm 147:10,11. Matthew 8:5-13.

This is healing from afar just as the centurion has experienced in the healing history of his servant.

Reflect: Message of hope for us to remember, that Jesus has the ability to make a difference in situations that are beyond our reach.

Jesus' message about himself:

While talking to her and healing her daughter, Jesus was giving out a clear message. While his primary mission was to work 'to find the lost Israel in sheep' such events would influence his disciples and set a precedent for their work in the near future.

Read: Matthew 28:18,19

Consider: How was this message of inclusiveness, love and mercy going to change the attitude of the disciples' thinking and their lives in future?

Slowly Jesus is introducing the disciples to a new social order for the kingdom of God, following his resurrection. He was more concerned about bringing everyone in rather than shutting certain people out.

He had died for everyone as the Saviour of the World. It would be the mission of his disciples in every age to take the good news of the gospel and the resurrection out into the whole world.

Read a message from Galatians 3: 26-28.



STUDY 3:

JESUS, FRIEND OF MARTHA AND MARY

This study looks at Jesus' relationship with a family whose story we may be very familiar with – Martha, Mary and Lazarus.

There are 3 references to this family in the gospels and we can learn so much about Jesus from their relationship with Jesus which can encourage us today.

Read: Luke 10:38-42

A meal with friends

Jesus and his disciples arrive at Bethany, a village about 2 miles from Jerusalem on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. Hospitality was considered a great virtue and even a commandment in Judaism, and there are many examples in the Old Testament (Genesis 18/Genesis 24).

1. What was bothering Martha? Verse 40

Martha used her gift of hospitality in the wrong way – she let it upset and worry her which led to a complaining spirit. She didn't make JESUS her priority.

How should we serve God? Colossians 3:23;
1 Peter 4:11

2. What was Mary doing? Verse 39

Jesus strongly commends Mary for choosing to sit at his feet and listen to him.

See also John 15:4 What does Jesus tell his disciples they should do? What does it mean 'to remain in me'?

3. How did Jesus respond to Martha? Verse 41,42

Martha takes her worry and anger to Jesus. He corrects her very kindly.

What can we do when worried and angry? See Psalm 52:22 and Phillipians 4:6-7.

What does God promise if we confess our sin?
1 John 1:9

Read: John 11:1-7

The death of Lazarus

4. What did Jesus do when he heard of Lazarus' illness and why? Verses 6, 14, 15

Read: verses 17-27

5. What did Martha say to Jesus?
Verses 21, 22, 24

Her words reveal she has faith in Jesus – she knows he has supernatural power and could have healed her brother. Now he's dead she believes Jesus can still perform a miracle, that God will listen to Jesus.

6. What did Jesus reply to Martha? Verse 25

Jesus tells her that he is the giver of life – eternal life. And Martha again expresses her faith that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God. Verse 27.

Read: verses 32-44

7. What does Mary do and say when she sees Jesus? Verse 32.

8. How does Jesus respond?
Verses 33, 35, 38

John records that Jesus was deeply moved in spirit and troubled and that he wept when he saw Mary crying. He showed great emotion, he was really touched, when he saw how much Mary was suffering in her grief.

Tim Keller, an American pastor and author, believes that Jesus felt so deeply because he was angry at the pain that death caused, and also because he knew what he would endure in order to conquer death.



Points to note:

- We have a God who walks with us in the Valley of the shadow of death. See Psalm 23:4
- Jesus is a Friend who holds us and weeps with us. See Hebrews 4:15; Isaiah 41:10
- He assures us of the hopeful ending to come. See John 11:25; Psalm 17:15; Romans 8:11; Revelation 22:3-5; Rev 22:4; Rev 22:5

Read: John 12:1-11, Matthew 26:6-13

A feast at Simon's house

The Feast at Simon the Leper's house is recorded by all four gospel writers.

9. Who was at the feast? John 12:2,3; Matthew 26:6

They certainly had good reason for a feast in Jesus' honour – one healed from leprosy, the other brought back to life. Martha is again serving, but this time there's no complaining!

10. What does Mary do and what explanation does Jesus give for her actions? Verses 3 and 7

It was a Jewish custom to wrap the body of a deceased person in cloths with spices and perfume (John 19:40). Her actions point forward to Jesus' death.

No doubt Mary was extremely grateful that Jesus had brought back her brother to life. But more than that, in that act she had seen a glimpse of God's glory (John 11:40). When Jesus brought Lazarus back to life he demonstrated his immense mercy, compassion and power over death. This had such an effect on Mary that she wanted to sacrifice the most expensive thing she possessed – her actions were a sign of her belief in Jesus, and her immense love and devotion.

Max Lucado in his book *Ten Women of the Bible* p.190 describes Mary's sacrificial offering in this way:

Mary's loving worship of Christ thus involved pouring an offering over the greatest offering ever given. She gave Jesus her most expensive earthly

possession to anoint him for the death and burial he would endure to pay the price of our sins.

If the disciples were unhappy about Mary's actions Jesus certainly wasn't. Jesus was so impressed with Mary's offering that he declares that Mary has done a beautiful thing that will be remembered forever.

Points to note:

- Jesus has power over death – the last enemy. See John 11:43, 44
- Jesus has shown us the greatest love ever imaginable. See John 15:13
- Jesus deserves our worship. See Luke 10:41-42, Mark 14:6, Romans 12:1
- Our worship is like perfume that pleases God, reminds other believers of Jesus and a witness to unbelievers. It should be extravagant. See 2 Corinthians 2:14-16

11. Read John 15:13. Who does Jesus say that he lays down his life for?

12. Read John 15:14. Who are Jesus' friends?

Those who believe Jesus like Mary and Martha and seek to follow him are his friends. Jesus is a friend like no other.

Consider how the following points from the study encourage and challenge us:

- He calls us to serve him – and gives us strength to do it
- He wants us to sit at his feet, to know his company and hear him speak
- He promises to walk with us through the darkest valley
- He can comfort us because he truly understands our pain
- He gives us hope for the future – he has conquered death and promises us eternal life
- He calls us to worship him extravagantly – to give him our all, the only fitting response to Jesus.

STUDY 4:

JESUS THE PHYSICIAN AND THE TWO SICK DAUGHTERS

In Luke chapter 8 we read about 2 sick daughters.

Read: Luke 8:40-56

1. Who were the two sick daughters? Verse 42-43

One was 12 years old, she was seriously ill, about to die. Her father, a ruler in the synagogue came to Jesus desperately seeking help, and Jesus agreed to go to his house.

The other 'daughter' we read about in this chapter had suffered from a chronic condition for 12 years – and Jesus called her his 'daughter.'

Imagine, the one family had known the joy of the daughter's presence for 12 years, seeing her grow and develop, hearing her first words, seeing her first steps. Now they know they are about to lose her.

We don't have any details about the older woman's family. Perhaps she was on her own, never having been married or had children and had suffered for 12 years all alone. Or she might have been married at one time but deserted because life with her and her condition was just too difficult.

According to the Law (Leviticus 15) she has been unclean the whole time, unable to go to the Temple or be around other people without passing her uncleanness to them. By now she is destitute, having spent all her money on treatments. Think of the emotional and spiritual effect on her and how desperate she must have been.

2. Jesus made his way toward Jairus's home and a crowd, including this sick woman, followed him. What did she do? Verse 44

Perhaps she had seen Jesus heal someone or just heard of his healing power. She knew that when he touched people they were healed, and she believed Jesus could heal her. But she decided to go secretly to avoid the shame of announcing her ailment to everyone and to avoid making Jesus unclean too.

Her desperation fuelled her determination. A soon

as she touched Jesus' cloak she knew she was healed. Surely a mix of emotions must have washed over her including joy, relief, excitement, awe.

3. What was Jesus' reaction? Verses 45,46

4. The woman realized she had been caught. What does she do and say? Verse 47

5. Notice how tenderly Jesus speaks to her and what he says. Verse 48. How did that make her feel – when was the last time she'd received such affection and kindness?

Let's examine Jesus' declaration more closely

- **Daughter:**

She is the only person in the New Testament to be called daughter by Jesus. He shows that she is under his care now, that they are now in a relationship. The amazing news of the gospel is that when we reach out to Jesus in faith like the bleeding woman, God responds by lavishing his love on us and adopting us as his children. See 1 John 3:1, Romans 8:15, Galatians 3:26

- **Your faith has healed you:**

This woman had tried so hard to keep her healing a secret, but Jesus put her on the spot, and she had to tell everyone. Jesus wasn't trying to shame her, rather, he was exposing her faith - this woman believed in him, and he wanted her healing and her faith to be visible to all who were around them.

6. What does the Bible say about faith? Hebrews 11:1, Luke 8:48, Ephesians 2:8, Matthew 17:20, James 2:26, Mark 9:24, Luke 17:5

7. In the Old Testament, how does the psalmist describe forgiveness of sin? Psalm 41:4, Psalm 103:3



8. The many healings that Jesus performed that are recorded in the gospels point us to the truth that Jesus gives spiritual healing to those who come to him in faith. We can have the sure hope that Jesus, the Great Physician, has the power to heal us from every sin. Read 1 Peter 2:24

- **Go in peace:**

This was a phrase often used in the Old Testament as a blessing on another's actions and intent. The Greek root *eirene* means harmony, security, safety, prosperity and the state of being right with God. In her healing and new relationship with Jesus this is exactly what this woman will now experience. See John 14:27

Now the account goes back to Jairus – Jesus was on his way to Jairus's house to see his dying daughter when this 'delay' occurred.

9. As Jesus speaks with the sick woman what news arrives? Verses 49-50

It seems that the delay has cost the girl's life.

But no, this delay had glorious consequences:

Healing: The bleeding woman was healed, and her faith is held up as an example to us all.

Relationship with Jesus: her new status as a daughter of the living God was affirmed.

Revelation of Jesus' power over death: Jairus, his family and the community got to see Jesus's remarkable power and glory as the girl was raised to life.

Jesus' tenderness and mercy revealed again here:

- He has already shown his tenderness and mercy in his dealing with the woman
- Now, as he takes the girl's hand, he calls her by a term of great endearment *Taliatha Koom* (honey/sweetheart) and brings her back from death – to the astonishment of all.

Hope for all who reach out to Jesus and trust his power.

10. How can we apply each of the above points personally?

Verses to encourage those struggling with unanswered prayer for healing:

Hebrews 11:39 Not every promised grace will be received in this age

Hebrews 11:40 In fact, most are being saved for our best life that is coming

Hebrews 4:16 But if we believe in him, we will receive sufficient grace

2 Corinthians 12:9 to help in our time of need.



STUDY 5:

THE LORD JESUS AND MARY MAGDALENE

Read: Matthew 28:2-8

We are going to look at the story of this amazing woman and see the first Easter through her experiences with her Saviour. She witnessed Jesus' mighty power and tender love for her – a love that is as alive for us today and as ready to respond to our day-to-day challenges.

Jesus found Mary in her darkest place when she was suffering severely, occupied by 'evil spirits' and in the darkest and most desperate place in her life.

We can only imagine what this suffering would have meant for Mary and her family, in terms of losing her dignity and self-control over her life.

Read: John 16:33, 1 John 3:8

The Good Shepherd healed her miraculously and Mary experienced the wonderful promise that nothing can separate her from the love of God.

Read: Romans 8:38,39.

As she followed her Lord and Saviour, she sets an example to us of how to remain loyal to Jesus in difficult and uncertain times.

Read: Luke 8:1-3

In these verses we get a picture of Mary's faithfulness to Jesus and his ministry.

In Luke 8 we see that Mary was one of the many followers of Jesus who dedicated their lives to support Jesus' work in 'shepherding the lost sheep of Israel' and establishing the kingdom of God.

Consider: What it must have been like for her to travel around the country with Jesus and his disciples?

Read: Matthew 26:56. Matthew 27: 55,56. Matthew 27: 59-61.

Mary clung to her Shepherd faithfully and gave him her full affections, whether he was alive – or dead. We read about her choosing to remain in Jerusalem when Jesus was arrested before the Crucifixion, and

despite the horrific scenes Mary stayed close to her Saviour's Cross.

Why? Did she and the other women feel that they couldn't leave him? She was the last to leave his tomb and on the day of the Resurrection, Mary was among the first to return to the tomb, when the other disciples were not around.

It was her heart's desire to walk close to her Shepherd and her Shepherd stayed close and remained faithful to her.

Mary's devotional life

Reflection: What can we understand from Mary's devotion to Jesus as we look at her actions on the morning of the Resurrection?

She had kept the Sabbath in accordance with tradition and the Law of Moses.

We can only imagine what kind of days Mary and the followers of Jesus had after the Crucifixion.

But whatever Mary felt, and whatever depressing task she and her friends faced that morning with Jesus' dead body, she decided to get up early on the first day of the new week, even before dawn.

Things were dark, not just the morning itself but the situation in general – Peter's denial, the disciples were in hiding, Pilate's cowardice, Christ's anguish on the Cross and then his death.

Nevertheless, she had a duty to perform to her Lord. She kept tradition and had prepared perfumes ready for anointing his dead body. She wanted to remain faithful and willing to serve her Lord whether dead or alive.

This was the pattern of her life, as a follower of Jesus, since she had been healed by Jesus, she and other of her friends faithfully serving Him day after day.

As she walked towards the tomb her main concern was how or who would move the large tombstone for her to anoint Jesus' body. She knew that she and her friends were not strong enough to carry out the task.



Was Mary expecting to see something different at the grave that morning? There is no indication that she was going to see an empty grave. Her Lord had been killed and she was heartbroken.

Consider: In our walk with God do we expect the unexpected from the Lord when faced with situations that leave us disappointed and hopeless?

Mary's tears tell us that she did not wake up that morning expecting to see Jesus alive again. Although Jesus died in the most shameful way, she wasn't ashamed of him. She neither betrayed nor left him. Mary's choice was to remain at the tomb loyal to Jesus until the end. Could she have pondered the Lord's messages to his followers about his death and resurrection?

Read: Matthew 12:40, Mark 8: 31-33

In any event, she came to the tomb in the hope of putting oil and perfumes on the body of Jesus and bid farewell to the one man who gave reason to all her hopes.

Reflect: No matter how depressed and disappointed we may feel, we can choose to wake up in the morning and turn to Jesus and his living Word to refresh us with hope in his love and protection.

Read: Psalm 119:114. Psalm 3:5. Matthew 28:5

Despite Mary's concerns, the stone was moved by the angel with little difficulty so that Mary and her friends could look into the tomb and begin to see evidence of the resurrection: an empty tomb.

The two Mary's thought it their duty to go to the tomb not expecting anything in return. God however knew of their dedication and the surprise that was planned and waiting for them.

Consider: Given all this, can we believe that Jesus has the capacity to deal with our challenges today, remove our large obstacles, meet our heavy concerns, so that we can see His glory?

Mary says, 'They have taken away my LORD.' This is who he still is to her soul even though he's dead. Jesus revealed himself to her and she worships him as Lord.

Quite often the Lord waits for us to despair of human strength and then intervenes to help us.

Mary was the first to see the glory of the risen Christ. The Shepherd called her by her name and greeted her with his usual warmth.

This was her Good Shepherd, faithful and true, of a gentle and humble heart, who desired that it was she, Mary – a woman, who had been so faithful and appreciative of him, that was to carry the good news of the Gospel to his disciples.

Read: Luke 24:10,11

Consider: We know that there was little respect for the testimony of a woman in the time of Jesus and initially the disciples dismissed the breaking news by Mary as 'like nonsense'. How did Jesus show respect towards the women he encountered?

Read: John 20:17,18.

Reflect: Imagine the excitement as she took the message to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord!'

Mary's background: She is named at least twelve times in the four gospels – more 'hits' than most of the other disciples. Little is known about her life other than she came from Magdala, a fishing town to the west of the Sea of Galilee.

Read: Mark 9:17,18

Luke 8:2 reveals details about Mary's life, possessed by seven demons before Jesus cast them out. She was not alone in this state as we read of others who also suffered severe emotional and psychological trauma and Jesus freed them. There is no mention in the Bible of Mary being a prostitute.

Read: Genesis 3:15, 1 John 3: 8. John 16:33

While the power of evil can disturb us, it cannot defeat us. The head of the serpent is crushed.

Only as we believe in Jesus and stand in the power of his might can we fight the enemy and like Mary be free of the darkness in our lives.

Her Society: We know that Mary stayed around like-minded groups of people like the disciples and Mary, Jesus' mother. There was also Joanna, the wife



of Chuza, Herod's steward – a person holding high office. Suzanna is also mentioned as women who had one thing in common, that they were healed of evil spirits and illnesses. They travelled with Jesus and helped support his ministry. As was the custom, they also supplied food and clothing from their own resources indicating that some of them were relatively wealthy.

Mary's service to Jesus with generosity and dedication was a reflection of her gratitude to him.

Today, we can marvel at the testimony of her life in giving so much, in giving all to her living Saviour, in response to his tender love and amazing healing and restoring power.

Read: Ephesians 3:20,21. Psalm 95:1-3.

I am the

Alpha and the Omega,

the Beginning and the End.

REVELATION 22.13

Theme Hope in Jesus 2022 • DORCAS PROGRAMME • 27



MONTHLY READING PLAN

A light unto my path

1

You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all.

Acts 10:36

2

He was with God in the beginning.

John 1:2

3

“Very truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!”

John 8:58

4

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

1 John 5:11

5

For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.

2 Corinthians 4:17

6

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

Revelation 1:8

7

Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

Hebrews 10:23

8

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

9

Why, my soul, are you downcast? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

Psalms 42:11

10

“The Lord reigns for ever and ever.”

Exodus 15:18

11

You, Lord, reign forever; your throne endures from generation to generation.

Lamentations 5:19

12

How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation.

Daniel 4:3

13

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign for ever and ever.”

Revelation 11:15

14

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

1 Timothy 1:17

15

There is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:4,6

16

“I and the Father are one.”

John 10:30



17

To the seven churches in the province of Asia: ... and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Revelation 1:4,5

18

On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written king of kings and lord of lords.

Revelation 19:16

19

Give thanks to the Lord of lords.
His love endures forever.

Psalms 136:3

20

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called

Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father,
Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:6

21

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Genesis 1:1

22

A day of the LORD is coming...
The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name.

Zechariah 14:1 a 9

23

We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true by being in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

1 John 5:20

24

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.

Hebrews 1:1,2

25

And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

John 17:5

26

‘He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts...Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him.

John 12:40,41

27

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

28

For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Matthew 24:27

29

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.”

Micah 5:2

30

“You are my witnesses,” declares the Lord, “and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.

Isaiah 43:10

31

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election... and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 1:11



Hymns relating to the theme

HOPE IN JESUS

IN CHRIST ALONE MY HOPE IS FOUND,
He is my light my strength my song.
This cornerstone, this solid ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.

ALL MY HOPE ON GOD IS FOUNDED,
He doth still my trust renew.
Me through change and chance he guideth,
Only good and only true.
God unknown, he alone
Calls my heart to be his own.

SEE WHAT A MORNING, GLORIOUSLY BRIGHT
With the dawn of hope in Jerusalem:
Folded the grave clothes, tomb filled with light
As the angels announce Christ is risen!

I HEAR THY WELCOME VOICE
Tis Jesus calls me on to perfect faith and love,
To perfect hope, and peace and trust,
For earth and heaven above.

CHRIST OUR HOPE IN LIFE AND DEATH
What is our hope in life and death?
Christ alone, Christ alone.
What is our only confidence?
that our souls to him belong.
Who holds our days within his hand?
What comes, apart from his command?
And what will keep us to the end?
The love of Christ in which we stand.

O sing Hallelujah!

Our hope springs eternal.

O sing Hallelujah!

Now and ever we confess,

Christ our hope in life and death.

MAKE ME A CHANNEL OF YOUR PEACE,
Where there's despair in life let me bring hope.
Where there's darkness only light,
And where there's sadness ever joy.

GOD, WHOSE ALMIGHTY WORD
Chaos and darkness heard,
And took their flight;
Hear us, we humbly pray,
And where the gospel-day
Sheds not its glorious ray,
Let there be light.

LIGHT OF THE WORLD
You stepped down into darkness
Opened my eyes, let me see,
Beauty that made this heart adore You
Hope of a life spent with You.

JESUS THOU JOY OF LOVING HEARTS
Fountain of life and light of men,
From the best bliss that earth imparts
We turn unfilled to You again.

LOVE DIVINE, ALL LOVES EXCELLING,
Joy of heaven to earth come down,
Fix in us Your humble dwelling
All Your faithful mercies crown.
Jesus You are all compassion,
Boundless love that makes us whole,
Visit us with Your salvation
Enter every trembling soul.

WHO CAN CHEER THE HEART LIKE JESUS
By His presence all divine,
True and tender pure and precious,
O how blessed to call Him mine.
All that thrills my soul is Jesus.
He is more than life to me
And the fairest of ten thousand
In my blessed Lord I see.

BLESSÈD ASSURANCE, JESUS IS MINE;
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God;
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour all the day long.



Thank you Sara and Nancy for the update from Cornerstone Uganda

It's been a hard year for Cornerstone in many ways! As you might be aware Doreen, the home manager, left us very suddenly to pursue studies in America. Thankfully Edward, one of the young men who Cornerstone has supported, was able to step into the breach at very short notice and with 100% commitment. Edward is now an artist having graduated from university. At such a worrying and difficult time, God truly sent an angel to support and help!

Due to Covid restrictions another year has passed without us being able to go over to Uganda, that in itself has been a challenge for Cornerstone as an organisation, for the boys and for us in a personal and managerial position. Also due to Covid, we have been put under financial pressure as have so many

businesses and charities over the last 2 years of the pandemic.

The boys are all doing ok- thankfully none of them have had covid. However, rules and curfews have been very strict in Uganda and it does seem to have paid off! None of the boys have been vaccinated yet, as the roll out is extremely slow and very costly, approximately £200 per vaccination. We are so grateful that God has kept them all well and safe. All schools and places of work have been closed, so there are no updates with that unfortunately. Isaac is just finally returning to school this month.

We have been using the funds this year again to sustain the boys as there is no welfare state or benefit system. Those out of work and struggling have either returned

home or we have sent money for food and other necessities. Silva now has a young family, so we were able to support with money for rent and living costs to keep them stable. Through God's grace we have been able to keep them all fed and with a roof over their head.

This year brings new challenges- our tenancy of the house expires in April, and this is a tough thing to negotiate and plan for remotely! Our NGO license has expired and there is much to be done in Uganda because it cannot be done from Wales.

So, in short, we continue to ask for prayer and are very thankful that all things considered Cornerstone has got through another year, not without its problems but with God firmly by our side.





HIV LESOTHO

Dr Graham Thomas

“**P**ing!” There’s another message from the mountains of Maluti in Lesotho (the Drakensburg for the Afrikaans) from far-away Africa, arriving on my phone.

The ‘HIV Lesotho’ charitable foundation has been active in villages in the area of Tebellong in the south-eastern region of that country since 2002. Our major involvement thus far has been in the field of health and care - chiefly in dealing with HIV. We also support the churches, schools and communities, with small projects, for example, setting up small businesses. Caring for families and orphan children, end-of-life care and health care, have occupied a substantial portion of our daily undertaking. The local churches and Christians lead this work through the hospice that was built back in 2008, by a group of young people from Saints in the Community, Wales. By now, education and new work ventures are also part of our activities, as we follow the leading and the aspirations of Tebellong’s communities and young people.

This year, we have been jointly working with two local churches, seven schools and several youth groups, as well as our long-term partners at the hospice and the hospital. The inspiration for our work has come from the challenge set by James (James 1:27): “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction..” (RSV).

THE HIV CONTAGION

At the beginning of the HIV plague during the 1980s and the 1990s, there was hardly any response to this disaster in the rural countryside of Lesotho. At the outset of the new millennium, we started seeing the emergence of a test and treatment, but by then it was very difficult to reverse the tide, despite the fact that both the hospital, its pro-active staff, as well as the churches, were supportive to the programme of help being offered. The fear and the stigma associated with HIV was too strong an impediment at the time. That’s how the ‘HIV Lesotho’ project got underway, by employing and sponsoring staff within the Lesotho community, and extending the hospital’s role.

In 2008, hospices were erected and opened within the community, by a group of young people from Wales. The hospital’s nurses were soon thereafter sponsored to travel on a monthly rotation, taking with them HIV testing and treatment paraphernalia. These journeys were, and still are, frequently undertaken on horseback, to the most remote villages and clinics. This service was later expanded to include the vaccinating of children, treating cases of Tuberculosis, and still more recently, a programme for educating people on contraceptive methods. This year, to that intensive work, was added the testing for and vaccinating against the Covid-19 pandemic.

This year, the only two doctors in Tebellong fell seriously ill, and were on the brink of death, from Covid-19. We give thanks to God that they both survived, aided by an intensive care treatment they received at the city’s hospital. As there were no Covid tests available locally, it’s impossible to determine how many people died as result of being infected by Covid. Money was raised by HIV Lesotho and the Presbyterian Church of Wales, via a ‘Facebook’ appeal, and food was acquired for many impoverished families during the earliest lockdown periods, and in addition, ‘PPE’ (Personal Protection Equipment) was provided for both schools and the hospital.

SUPPORTING EDUCATION IN LESOTHO

Since the beginning of October 2021, two itinerant computer classes have been established. Twenty young farmers received training in conservation issues, and five teachers carry with them a dozen laptop computers from school to school. The provision of both computer and agricultural education will support local schools, and will also expand the young people’s horizons as the Charity supports them to settle and find employment within their own communities. One of the orphan children (her mother was the first person to publicly announce that she was suffering from HIV) has joined this project this year as a graduated teacher. The schools are reporting a major improvement in attendance since these lessons began, and the venture has raised the teachers’ morale.



The Tebello Secondary School was first established in the 1990s by a small group of students and unemployed teachers. Education was provided for children who could not otherwise afford the school fees plus accommodation in towns on the other side of the river Senqu. Since then the school has provided education to hundreds of pupils, and has offered opportunities for them to progress further towards either employment or higher education. For twenty years we have helped to pay their fees, so that orphan children can be educated; and we have also paid for some of their hospital treatments. We have even contributed finances towards a fund which pays the funeral costs on behalf of the most impoverished of all the families there. The school is presently erecting a new building which will serve as a community computer classroom - this is happening some five years after electricity first arrived in this area in 2016.

COVID-19

The Covid-19 pandemic brought with it severe numbers of illnesses, and deaths, but the lockdown periods were also accompanied by the insurmountable difficulty of famine which meant hunger for throngs of people. Lesotho's economy consists of many people who earn only just enough to live one day at a time. By now, the 'Omicron' variant of Covid-19 has arrived at Tebello. The majority of the population there have received a vaccination from the hospital's workers, and are currently experiencing that this new variant of the pandemic is relatively mild.

FARMING GOD'S WAY

'Growing Nations' is our agricultural conservation partner on a project called 'Conservation Agriculture'. 'Growing Nations' was begun in Tebello some three decades ago, as the church's response to local poverty and famine. This agricultural methodology is familiarly referred to in Africa as 'Farming God's Way'.

'Farming God's Way' encourages farmers to engage in farming methodologies and systems which are God-friendly, nature-friendly and earth-friendly. To learn more about it, go to the website <http://www.growingnations.co.za/about>. This year, farmers have been blessed by sufficient rain-fall, although some crops were ruined by a massive hailstorm. Potatoes have thrived in such weather, and the 'new potatoes' could be harvested at a seasonal time to be sold, and thus provide an income to the newest young farmers.

LESOTHO'S EVANGELICAL CHURCH

The new minister of Lesotho's Evangelical Church has arrived in Tebello. Ntate Limpho, has previous experiences as both a carpenter and a worker in an aluminium manufacturing plant. He will be training a group of young people to create and repair windows,

roofs and doors of local schools. The 'HIV Lesotho' charity will sponsor this youth work for its first year, in the hope that the workshop will be set up and established as an independent business. Another minister in an AoG (Assemblies of God) church, Ntate Tsepo, will be directing and leading the work with the orphan children and the community's computer training programme. In Lesotho churches there is no central financial support for ministers, they rely entirely on the Sunday's free-will offering collections. Because the Covid sickness has had the impact of decimating congregations, the ministers as a consequence are experiencing much hardship and austerity. HIV Lesotho is supporting the ministers through a monthly allowance, in exchange for their engagement in partnering with us in our work assignments, thereby extending the church's ministry in Tebello.

TEBELLONG'S MISSION HOSPITAL

This year Tebello's Mission Hospital, which has fifty beds, celebrated fifty five years of work and mission to its own community. It is this hospital's management team that administers both the salaries / wages and all the expenditure costs of the HIV Lesotho project and they annually produce a detailed audit of their accounts. HIV Lesotho annually sends between twenty and twenty five thousand pounds (£20K - £25K) to the Hospital and we are also very grateful the Presbyterian Church of Wales's Women's Sub-committee, for their regular annual support of £3,000, over a number of years by now. These gifts enable us to extend our projects, and demonstrate our concern for the wider Church of Jesus Christ. This year, with the financial constraint experienced by us all on account of the Covid disease, Lesotho's government has found it particularly difficult to fund their hospitals. Members of hospital staff are working without being paid, and patients have to wait without either food or medicines. They are in a real emergency crisis. Out of such a situation, HIV Lesotho has presented a massive financial request for a grant to the Welsh Government's fund which is specifically reserved for Wales-African ventures. Our hope is that a way might be found for the hospital to survive and be able to invest in staff and essential equipment for a very uncertain future.

We wish to thank the friends of the Presbyterian Church of Wales and others for all your support over the recent years. For further information, please get in touch with Dr Graham Thomas on his e-mail address at: drgrahamthomas@gmail.com

Gifts are gratefully received through the charitable account of the Church of Christ, which has the following account details: Organisation's Name: CC of Christ. Sort Code: 40-16-02. Account Number: 61669125.



K WARD, SYNOD HOSPITAL, DURTLANG, MIZORAM

In February Nan Powell-Davies contacted Dr Dina on Zoom to ask him how the work is going and how have they been affected by COVID 19.

Since our last report the Delta variant has struck India. How did that effect Mizoram and especially those living with addiction?

India was affected greatly by the Delta variant and now the Omicron variant has arrived in India. At the time of writing (February 2022) the two Christian states, Mizoram and Kerela, have many cases and it's spreading like wildfire. At the moment we are in a mini lockdown, and schools and churches are shut.

Lockdown badly effects those living with addiction because they need to be fed spiritually and have fellowship and accountability. We usually spend a lot of our time in church in Mizoram – we have around 8 different meetings weekly in our churches. Initially those living with addiction think that they can survive without accountability or fellowship in the KTP meetings (KTP is the Christian youth movement in Mizoram). There aren't many opportunities for recreation outside of church life for them. We know that the real effects of this will be seen in the future.

Already, due to loneliness, drinking and drug taking has increased here.

We usually arrange 'Gospel Camping' (residential time away) for those with drug addiction, and this helps them on the road to recovery, but of course these days that cannot happen either.

KTP are trying to use the social media platforms, but I don't know how effective they really are. 1,000 members attend meetings in person, but only around 30 will meet over zoom. There are still network issues, and some don't have mobile phones etc here in Mizoram. We are also aware that due to the pandemic, false teachers have arisen, and they have many followers.

When the 'new normal' arrives, things will not be the same – we see that among the youth the commitment is not the same, it's not there anymore. COVID has made us lazy. But by God's grace we will survive. We estimate that around 70% of church members came back to church when lockdown was

lifted, as did the most vulnerable, but we believe we have probably lost around 50% of the young people, or perhaps even more. We have adapted to a different way of living. Not being able to meet in church is frustrating, especially because the symptoms of this variant in comparison to the last variant is mild – we have to learn how to live with COVID.

During the last two years of living in a pandemic, what have been the greatest challenges for you personally and to K Ward?

The psychological and the spiritual side of the work are great challenges for us and the recreational side is lacking – the patients just sleep, eat and repeat. We don't have a halfway home, and there is such a great need for one. This would be a place where they would learn social skills and start to take some responsibility for themselves.

How many times do we hear the words, 'This will be my last time here!' But we know that unfortunately they will come back! They can't do it on their own – 30 days of rehabilitation is not enough, but that's all we can offer as a hospital. After that they need to live as human beings, and to work on their lives again. Their addiction makes them feel very low. In a halfway home they could learn how to work with others, find their value again, have a chance to live in society again, and enjoy life and living with others.

We are now seeing refugees from Myanmar but following up these cases is very difficult. They need to see their families again, but at the moment they are not allowed due to the pandemic.

What can we pray for you personally?

We would be very grateful if you could pray for the following points:

- Pandemic – Effects on our lives.
- Youth of Mizoram – Pray that they will have hearts to receive the Gospel.
- K Ward – Some patients are coming with no money, but we need money to function. We have a lot of unpaid bills. Pray for their health as patients, especially those with wounds and ulcers. We have many HIV patients.
- Post Covid anxiety – Especially on K ward.



REACHING ROMANIA

Report by Irene Phillips



FUNDING RECEIVED AND HOW IT HAS BEEN SPENT

We thank you again for the £2,000 funding received in October, 2021. After prayer, we were led to apportion the funds as follows: £1,000 to the Widows Mite Project, £500 for Children's Homes and £500 for the "Copilul din Mine" Educational Project. Here are reports relating to all three Ministries which I hope you enjoy.

UPDATE REPORT ON THE "WIDOWS MITE" MINISTRY

Further to my report of 26th July, 2021 I am pleased to inform you that 3 new widows have been added to the program following the death of M from Arad:

J aged 68 is a former accountant who was imprisoned for 9 years. She was miraculously saved in prison and now loves and serves the Lord with all of her heart. 2 years ago she was diagnosed with breast cancer but following a mastectomy has recovered well. She rents a small room and bathroom in some-one's backyard, struggles financially but is full of the joy of the Lord. She is so grateful for her monthly food basket and winter wood.

D aged 33 is a single mum with 4 young sons including twins aged 6 – she really struggles financially and the monthly food parcels are such a

help. Her husband sadly died of cancer a few years ago and her elderly aunt gave the family shelter following their loss. She is an incredibly strong woman in the way she cares for her children and deals with life. Leader Ramona encourages her a lot in her faith.

R aged 34 has 3 children – 2 girls aged 9 and 6 and a teenage son. Her husband recently abandoned the family and gives no financial support. Some of her friends have come alongside to find the family a place to stay. She is so appreciative for monthly food and donations of second hand clothes and toys from members of Ramona's church.

During the autumn all the widows received a supply of winter wood or a heating allowance. We give thanks to Ramona for purchasing wood for Cati from Vinga and also to some Danish friends who kindly supplied PVC windows and a door to help keep the heat in her mud brick house.

For Christmas we packed a variety of household, woollen, toiletry and personal items enabling Ramona to make up gift bags for each widow and widower which she delivered with their Christmas food parcels. In addition to this, funding was provided to purchase an additional gift of their choice – some opted for slippers and others pyjamas. Each also received a hand crocheted lap blanket courtesy of Elizabeth from the Brecon Presbyterian

Church. Some of the younger widows have children and so we ensured that all 17 received a shoe box gift – much to their delight.

A Father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. Psalm 68:5

REPORT ON THE CHILDREN'S HOMES WE SUPPORT

We have had a long-established relationship with 3 Christian Children's Homes who work alongside the Child Protection Department with regard to placements. A total of 32 vulnerable children are currently being cared for at "Caleb", a Boys House in Ianova in a farm setting, "Osana", a Girls Home in Timisoara and "Tabita", a mixed House in Arad.

Many of these children have experienced traumatic childhoods and we give thanks that they have been rescued, placed in a safe environment where they are truly loved and cared for with the patience, understanding and compassion they need. As well as house parents, there is a social worker and psychologist on hand to help with the healing process.

Each Home has a policy of keeping siblings together and this touches our hearts because the children keep their bond with each other. All are brought up to know Jesus and are encouraged and supported in their Christian journey and with their

education so they can reach their full potential. They are also taught life skills – budgeting, cooking, cleaning, sewing, bike maintenance, DIY etc.

Unlike State run Homes where children have to leave at age 18 to fend for themselves, these children are able to remain until they finish their education and have secured employment. Some have even achieved degrees. They receive ongoing support with their independent living.

Over many years we have been blessed to see the "fruit" of this incredible Ministry work and we give thanks for all the support received. 100% of donations goes towards the education, health and welfare of these children. Our sponsors all receive background and update reports.

TESTIMONY OF TWO GIRLS PLACED IN ONE OF THE HOMES

This is the story of 2 sisters whose lives were turned around by the love of God.

G and R were both born into an extremely difficult home life. Their mother was scarred by her past having been brought up in a state orphanage and was ill-prepared to go out into the world to live independently. Due to her past, she craved love and soon had 2 daughters whom she struggled to care for. She later fell in love with a man whom she married, and they had a further daughter. However,





she suffered badly with post-natal depression and struggled to care for her baby. During my time serving full time in Romania I was able to support by periodically taking in the baby to give her breaks.

During I's depression her marriage broke up and her husband moved to Austria with their daughter leaving G & R with their mother. However, I continued to struggle, even with the support we were giving her. Her post-natal depression developed into more serious mental health problems resulting in her 2 daughters being neglected. One day they were found wandering the streets alone and were in danger of being picked up and exploited. We give thanks that they were rescued by our friend, the late Pastor Jackie who worked with the Child Protection Department in placing them into one of the Christian Children's Home where they received all the love and support they needed.

Sadly, their mother's health deteriorated further and she was placed in a Mental Hospital where she still resides. The girls remain in touch with their mother and visit her periodically. Prior to the pandemic a Christian team weekly visited the Psychiatric Hospital where I joined in with the programs.

G & R settled well at the Children's Home and excelled with their education. We gave thanks that 3 years after they entered the Home, they both gave their hearts to Jesus and were baptized – their healing process was complete. One is a gifted

musician and singer and the other has a heart for mission. In the past 2 years God has blessed them both with Christian husbands through their Church. Their weddings were arranged through the Home.

We give thanks for the work of God's hands in the lives of these vulnerable children, and we give Him all the Glory. Please keep all the children and dedicated leaders in your prayers.

"For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord – plans to prosper and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" Jeremiah 29:11

REPORT ON THE "COPILUL DIN MINE" EDUCATIONAL MINISTRY

The above Romanian Christian Charity is run by a lovely lady called Mihaela whom I was introduced to by a friend several years ago. We have seen first-hand the extent of her ministry and our Trustees were led to support.

Mihaela has such a heart for supporting the needs of her own people. Her main "calling" is supporting children from poor families to enable them to get a good education to secure a future. Each September she buys new school bags and supplies all the stationery materials needed for them to enrol in school. In addition to this she purchases new shoes and winter coats for each child. She liaises with staff at 2 schools in Arad and 1 in Ineo regarding the circumstances of the families involved.

Mihaela, who is supported by her husband and mother also delivers monthly food parcels to around 40 poor families. During Covid lockdown she provided a laptop to the children from “Tabita” children’s home to help with home schooling. Prior to the pandemic she has also provided Christian summer camps for poor children.

*“And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus”.
Philippians 4:19*

AREFLECTION

Mother Teresa quote: Together we can do great things”. May you be blessed for your love, prayers and support.



“Reaching Romania”, Padest, High Street, Sennybridge, Brecon. LD3 8PG
Phone: 01874 636575 or 07910939716. Charity number: 1081605
Email: admin.reachingromania@gmail.com Website: www.reachingromania.com

EPJM REPORT

SINGAPORE ENGLISH PRESBYTERY JAPAN MISSION

THERE IS A PROVERB THAT SAYS, "EVERY CLOUD HAS A SILVER LINING."

This Covid-19 pandemic has impacted all aspect of life globally. It is the same also in how we do missions. What we used to be doing has changed dramatically that we don't even know how to plan anymore.

Since the triple disasters that happened in North Eastern Japan in March 11, 2011, EPJM had been sending teams almost every month for 8 years. But since the pandemic, we were unable to send any teams at all. So what should we do? Do we just sit and wait for the pandemic to be over? But amazingly, we thank God for technology. It can do more than we can ever imagine.

We know God is still working when we couldn't be physically in Japan. The churches and church plants continue to do their outreach ministry.

We continue to conduct the monthly prayer meeting virtually and invite our 3-11 ICN partners to share their joys and challenges.

We also conduct monthly English Cafe virtually with Morioka Bible Baptist Church. It is their outreach ministry to those who would like to learn and converse in English with native speakers.

In October 2021, when the situation in the coastal area in Miyako got better, we explored digital mission with Pastor Iwatsuka from Miyako Community Church. For many years we had been working alongside with him and we were excited to reconnect with the folks which we had not seen for almost 2 years. We conducted a few sessions in October and November, and it was quite a success.

Then a very ambitious request from him to conduct 5 sessions for Christmas outreach in December. We were excited but with such a short timeline, we sought the Lord of the harvest in Matthew 9:37 to send His laborers. God answered amazingly by providing the 5 teams.

Upon his request, we made Christmas cards and handwritten letters in Japanese to post to Japan for the December outreach.



The Christmas outreach program comprised of the Christmas story, songs, games and was conducted in an hour via zoom.

To see the happy faces and smiles of the elderly whom we have not seen for 2 years brought much joy to our hearts. It was wonderful to hear their laughter and chatter with each other.

Most of them are elderly and they live alone and are isolated. There is also the concern that they may be suffering from dementia.

So the effort to come and join the Christmas program brought much excitement.

This reconnection is also a way to encourage Pastor Iwatsuka that we are supporting the ministry to the tsunami survivors and help him to stay faithful and persevere in the ministry as it may be discouraging for him with the lack of connection.

The contribution from PCW Women's Subcommittee has been channeled to the December outreach to help him to buy a wide-angle camera and to obtain a data plan to conduct the programs in the different community centers.

In spite of the pandemic, we see God's hand working out His purposes in this land of Japan. To human eyes it may seem small, but I believe God can use whatever we have to offer Him – our 5 loaves and 2 fish can multiply to be of great significance to these precious souls, so that they will find hope in Jesus Christ and receive Him as Savior & Lord one day.

To God be the glory.

SUSAN ENG.

WAY OF HOPE HUNGARY

REPORT BY KORNÉL SZILÁGYI

Looking back on the past year, we can say that although the epidemic situation rewrote all our plans, by God's grace we were able to have a successful year, rich in blessings and experiences.

Restrictions and closures due to the epidemic prevented us from holding our regular meetings outside the borders, but we were able to go to several places within Hungary.

We are thankful to God and our language teachers that the obstacles to our summer language camps were removed. Many children attended our six English language camps. They gained experience and their English language skills developed. They were encouraged to express their thoughts in front of native English speakers.



Their experiences of success built their character and gave them the confidence to learn more language skills. These children need to understand that as we are born Hungarian, we must learn languages to build a better, more successful future. And in the afternoons, quizzes and sports games helped the children learn to think in teams, to focus on helping their peers and working together rather than on individual success. Of course, they also participated in a Bible study every day. These were in English with translation. Each day they were treated to a scene with the apostle Paul in period costume, after which the teacher explained the essence of the story and its lessons for our lives.

In Csengőd, after the camp, the local Baptist Church, the camp teachers and the Way to Hope Foundation organise regular monthly club holidays for the children who attended the camp. In this way, the connection with the children was not broken at the end of the camp. An opportunity for a kind of



after-care, relationship building and strengthening was created. To our great joy, several former campers participate in these regular sessions.



We were able to visit several places before Christmas to give gifts to the children. Among others, we visited the Kőszeg Children's Home, the Csepel Mother and Transition Home, the Erzsébet Mother and Child Care Home and the Kiskunmaja Family Transition Home. In addition to the gifts, we also took the Good News with us to all these places. Special thanks go to the Wesselényi Street Baptist Church for the generous gift boxes they assembled for the residents of the home in Kiskunmajsa, the Pesterzsébet Baptist Church for the packages they assembled for the young residents of the Erzsébet Mother's Home and the Nagyszokoly Municipality for their donation of pasta to support the mothers living in the places mentioned above.

Personally, I thank God that I had the opportunity to further my education during the past year. You may remember that I have had another job since October 2020. This has allowed me to reduce Foundation expenses and make good use of the extra time I have had as Foundation trips have been



reduced due to restrictions. During this time, I have gained qualifications as a teaching assistant and a remedial teacher assistant, which I can use to raise the standard of the Foundation's ministry.

Thanks to all of you who take the work of the Way of Hope Foundation to heart and contribute to the success of the ministry through prayer, volunteerism and financial support.

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- We want to continue the ministry. For the reopening of possibilities of taking trips to Ukraine and Serbia.
- The epidemic should not hinder our work.
- May God give strength to the health workers to cure people.
- May God send native English speaking volunteers to participate in the Foundation's language camps planned for the summer of 2022. Language camps cannot be organised without teachers.
- Even though the timing is not the best again, as both used and new car prices are rising, we will contact dealerships this spring and ask them for bids to replace the Foundation's van. In 2021, several of our supporters have financed this project. Thanks to all of them! We pray that we will receive bids that will allow us to replace the foundation van in the spring of 2022.

WAY OF HOPE FOUNDATION

We are grateful to God for all the opportunities. He has given to us to speak about the good news and provide support for those who are in need. Glory to God for those people who make sacrifices by helping financially and physically. The foundation relies solely on the financial giving and time of people to continue the work of the ministry.

CONTACT US: wayofhope@wayofhope.co.uk

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

If you would like to donate to this invaluable work. Please see information below:

- BACS direct payment to "Way of Hope Foundation". Account number: 90257230 Sort code: 20-44-86
- By monthly standing order payment to Way of Hope (any sum of your choice)
- By Just Giving (use our website: wayofhope.co.uk)
- Cheque (payable to 'Way of Hope Foundation')
- Cash via your local Way of Hope contact

GOLUD

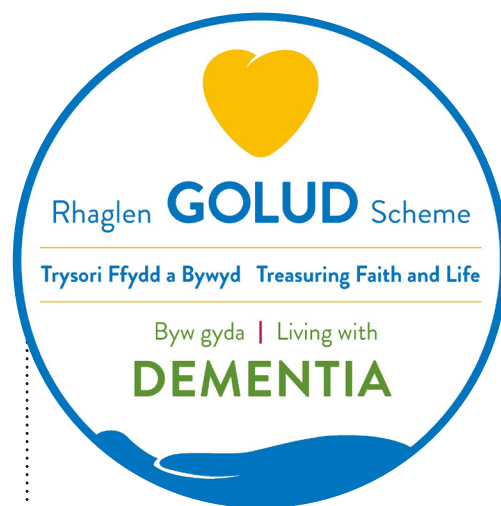
TREASURING FAITH AND LIFE

As you may know by now, the Church adopted the Golud Scheme at our General Assembly last year. Golud is being promoted by the Women's Sub-committee, with the aim of ensuring that faith is treasured when responding to Dementia.

Dementia is a growing health problem in Wales and you may well have direct experience with a family member, neighbour or a member at your congregation. So it makes sense to be as knowledgeable as possible so that we can respond sensitively and be helpful.

In recent months the Golud co-ordinators have been working on the first objective of the Golud scheme which is to raise awareness of dementia across the Connexion, starting with the ministers, PCW workers and staff before extending the provision to the Presbyteries. Golud is working in partnership with the Alzheimer's Cymru to offer Dementia Friends sessions, as a starting point to deliver relevant information on dementia.

On the following pages we've included some feedback comments from three new Dementia Friends who have



joined a virtual session recently. There is also information from organisations working in the field of dementia, and who are supportive of Golud. They offer information and guidance on relevant issues such as supporting carers, coping with stress, as well as dementia ministry.

GOLUD

DEMENTIA FRIENDS

WHAT IS A DEMENTIA FRIEND?

Dementia Friends is an Alzheimer's Society initiative to change the way people think, act and talk about dementia. A Dementia Friend is somebody that learns more about dementia and takes action to support people living with the condition, in their community - so people feel supported and able to live without fear and stigma.

Within the Church, simply by showing understanding, offering support and making small changes to the environment and worship, we can help someone with dementia to continue to attend services and take part in a way that is meaningful to them.

DEMENTIA FRIENDS SESSIONS

Learn more about what it is like to live with dementia and turn that understanding into action. It's really easy to do within an hour. Here are some recent feedback comments from new Dementia Friends:

I recently joined a session of Dementia Friends through the GOLUD scheme. I was reminded of the impact of dementia on the mind and on day-to-day life of people living with the condition. This made me appreciate afresh why a person living with dementia responds in such a way and how we should react positively and be supportive of them. The illustrations used helped me to understand the reality of the condition and how individuals can live well with dementia. It was good to be challenged at the end, to think about one thing, that I could do to help someone living with dementia.

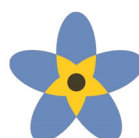
GWYN

Joining the Dementia Friends session, through the Golud project, was indeed an eye-opener for me. I realised how little I knew before-hand about dementia. The session led us to understand the simple steps we can all take to make a big difference to the individuals living with dementia. As a result, I can now see dementia in real terms and have been enlightened on how to respond in positive and supportive ways, that will help the person living with dementia.

EMYR

The Dementia Friends' session was so interesting and inspiring. I really enjoyed it even though I've had experience of dementia within my circle of friends. From now on, I intend to be more of a Friend to those living with Dementia by using the information shared in the session. Thank you.

MAIR



Dementia Friends
Information Session

Alzheimer's Society Cymru - Is an organization that provides information and support, fund research and create lasting change for people who are affected by dementia in Wales.

Our dementia advisers will listen and give you support and advice, including coronavirus advice, connecting you to help you need.

WELSH SUPPORT LINE 03300 947 400

ENGLISH SUPPORT LINE 0333 150 3456

Further support

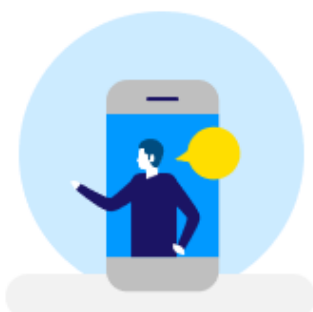


Alzheimer's Society



alzheimers.org.uk

Dementia Connect support line



0333 150 3456

Talking Point



alzheimers.org.uk/talkingpoint

Local support



alzheimers.org.uk/dementiaconnect



GOLUD

SHARING INFORMATION

**YMDDIRIEDOLAETH
GOFALWYR**
Gogledd Cymru
Gwasanaethau Gofal Croesffyrdd

**CARERS
TRUST**
North Wales
Crossroads Care Services

Carers Trust Wales is a registered charity that exists to improve support, services and recognition for unpaid carers in Wales. With our Network Partners – local services that deliver support to carers – we work to ensure that information, advice and practical support is available to carers across the country.

CARING FOR SOMEONE WITH DEMENTIA: A GUIDE FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS WHO LOOK AFTER A PERSON WITH DEMENTIA

Caring is often rewarding but we know that it can affect a person's health and well-being, employment and personal relationships...

This guide gives information on a range of matters including what you can expect in the early stages of getting a diagnosis, looking after your own well-being and thinking ahead about financial and legal matters.



CARERS OUTREACH SERVICE
www.carersoutreach.org.uk
01248 370 797
help@carersoutreach.org.uk

CARERS TRUST SOUTH EAST
WALES
www.ctsew.org.uk
01495 769996
info@ctsew.org.uk

CARERS TRUST NORTH WALES
CROSSROADS CARE SERVICES
www.nwcrossroads.org.uk
01492 542212

SWANSEA CARERS CENTRE
www.swanseacarerscentre.org.uk
01792 653344
admin@swanseacarerscentre.org.uk

CARERS TRUST
CARMARTHENSHIRE
CROSSROADS CARE
www.carmarthenshirecrossroads.org.uk
01554 754957 (Llanelli)
01267 220046 (Carmarthen)
info@carmarthenshirecarers.org.uk

NEWCIS: NORTH EAST WALES
CARERS INFORMATION SERVICE
www.newcis.org.uk
01745 331181 (Denbighshire)
01352 752525 (Flintshire)
01978 423114 (Wrexham)
enquiries@newcis.org.uk

CREDU
www.credu.cymru
01597 823 800
info@credu.cymru

BRIDGEND CARERS CENTRE
www.bridgendcarers.co.uk
01656 658479
enquiries@bridgendcarers.co.uk

GOLUD

LIVING WITH DEMENTIA



My name is Jon Stockley. I am the son of a, now retired, church pastor. My dad has been a strong man throughout his adult life. He was always strong physically, but he was also a man of strong belief and faith. I have fond memories of the lively debates we had when I was younger. My father's faith was very traditional, biblical and reformed. On the other hand, I was exploring my own relationship with Jesus and was convinced that there was a different perspective of Jesus for me.

Often, it was a case of the irresistible force meets the immovable object! On reflection, I have come to realise how much we both loved God, even though the exchanges could be quite heated.

Now my dad has dementia and much of that strength seems such a distant memory. Dad is often confused, and he forgets so much. He asks the same questions repetitively and because he is also physically challenged he spends much of his days exhausted, in and out of sleep.

Yet, to this day, he still reads his Bible every day and when any of us offer to pray with him, the joy and excitement is clear to see. Though he lacks assurance more than at any other time of his life, I believe his faith remains strong and deeply important to him.

My mother is a rock to my father, as are my brother and sister-in-law. They all live in South Wales and I live in North Wales. The care they give to Dad relentlessly is inspirational. But, when I phone my parents and I simply say that we love them and we are praying for them, I realise that prayer still remains the single most important and comforting thing for both of them.

*And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,
"Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people,
and he will dwell with them. They will be his people,
and God himself will be with them and be their God.
He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be
no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the
old order of things has passed away."*

Revelation 21:3-4

As a Christian organisation we base what we do on the teachings of the Bible. God tells us in the Bible how precious His people are – even in old age.

Our updated Dementia Information Pack contains a series of leaflets on different aspects of dementia, including diagnosis, caring and managing challenging behaviour, and caring for the caregiver.



Six Key Steps to Making a Dementia Friendly Church

'Spiritual support is vital for Christians who develop dementia. Their core values and beliefs form the basis of their identity, including their identity in Christ.

Yet because of their challenges with social interactions...they stop going to church. This book looks at proven principles that can be put in place by any church who wants to become dementia-inclusive.'



SETTING OURSELVES FREE FROM STRESS

We need a little stress in our lives simply to keep us going. But chronic, high levels of stress are dangerous to our physical and mental well-being. We know from research that stress is not only damaging to the health of your heart, but it leads to inflammation and is also indicated in increased risk of dementia. So, what practical things can we do to release ourselves from it and stay steady and grounded?

Get at least seven hours of sleep a night – It doesn't have to be seven hours straight sleep, but we need three 90-minute sleep cycles. If you have times of wakefulness, try singing worship songs in your mind, or use the time to pray.

Exercise – the silver bullet wherever health is mentioned – from vigorous housework to walking, or hard running or swimming. Mostly, walking is the preferred activity, with a bit of uphill included.

Practising Mindfulness – Mindfulness is simply bringing

our thoughts into the moment. C S Lewis wrote that 'when our minds are over-occupied with the big things happening in the world we become ineffective in our own small lives.' Certainly, our stress levels soar! The Psalmist wrote, 'I have certainly soothed and quieted my soul; Like a weaned child resting against his mother, my soul within me is like a weaned child.' (Psalm 131:2).

Laugh – A recent study showed laughter can relieve arterial stiffness and blood vessel function, and that heart disease was less prevalent amongst people who laughed most days than those who didn't.

Drink some Cocoa – Researchers have found that blood vessels functioned better during emotional stress when people drank cocoa. It contains flavanols, chemicals with proven cardiovascular benefits. The same effect is found in intensely dark chocolate, but there's something more comforting about a hot chocolate drink.

Casting your cares on God – The apostle Peter tells us to cast our cares upon Jesus, because He cares

about us. (1 Peter 5:7). If we're honest, it can be easier said than done.

Soothing distractions – Many people find that gardening helps relieve stress. There is also music, and losing yourself in a good book and being massaged with and sniffing essential oils is helpful.

But the most important thing is **people**. An NHS psychiatrist said that 'the source of happiness for the vast majority of people are the relationships that we form with others.' Especially in our churches. Research finds that people who belong to a church live longer and cope with stress better than others.

*Hear my cry, God; Give Your attention to my prayer.
From the end of the earth I call to You when my heart is faint;
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I.
For You have been a refuge for me,
A tower of strength against the enemy.
Let me dwell in Your tent forever;
Let me take refuge in the shelter of Your wings. Psalm 61:1-4*

Excerpts from Pilgrims' Friend Society's March News Update



GUIDANCE ON DEMENTIA ENGAGING MINISTRY

BY KAREN JENNINGS, METHODIST HOMES ASSOCIATION SUPPORT CHAPLAIN

1. Many care homes will have people living with dementia. The extent of its impact will be varied from mild to advanced symptoms of the disease. There are different types of dementia affecting different parts of the brain. Symptoms may include memory loss, lack of concentration, personality changes, mood swings, aggression and repetitive speech. However, as each person with dementia has symptomatic variation, it is important to see them as an individual living with dementia.
2. Find sacred moments to connect, whether through talking, singing, praying with them or in silence. It could be just through holding their hand, smiling with them or laughing together. These moments are special and you realise that you have connected with them. They will remember how you made them feel.
3. Always speak slowly and loudly but not in a patronising way, but with a warm personal tone, making lots of eye contact.
4. Ensure the elderly have their glasses on and hearing aids switched on.
5. Ensure your environment is well lit, that it is peaceful and calm. You can play instrumental worship before and after a service. Have familiar symbols present such as a Cross, a candle, a Bible and even a bunch of flowers, these remind them that a worship service is going to begin.
6. Use an agenda or theme, but go with the flow. Move around the room, feel free to help people find the correct hymn page or to touch someone's hand. Worship with them, set the example. Use dementia-friendly hymns, they are often sung in lower keys and use shorter verses.
7. Whatever agenda or theme you use, keep certain elements consistent every week, such as an opening prayer, familiar hymns, reciting the Lord's Prayer and the closing Blessing.
8. Use and read from a handheld traditional Bible as this provides another point of recognition and familiarity.
9. When bringing a short reflection to a close, make it interactive by asking questions, use props, engage the senses. The use of our senses will enhance the experience of worship. Remember, God works in mysterious ways and is able to do far more than we can ask, think or imagine.
10. Use people's names and affirm their contributions and thoughts, no matter what they say. Respect each person affirming they are valued and loved. Keep affirming spiritual truths, particularly that they are SO loved.
11. Handle interruptions or disruptions with patience and grace, call in another staff member or if you are visiting and taking a service go in a pair or a group of 3. Remain open to learning to discover ways in which older people, including those living with dementia, can be drawn into worship and find it a positive experience.

GOLUD

A DEMENTIA-ENGAGING SERVICE

One of the aims of GOLUD is to help churches minister to those living with dementia. A major part of church life is obviously Sunday services. Some churches, if they have members who have dementia, hold special 'dementia-friendly' services. Other churches have tried to adapt their normal services considering the needs of those in the congregation who are living with dementia so they can still engage and take part in the service. This means being aware of the problems that arise if a person has short-term memory loss, difficulty processing long sentences and low concentration spans. Much depends on the person's experience of being in church. If they have been a regular attender, memories will be crystallized in their long-term memory and the rhythm of the familiar service will bring them peace.

This service tries to take these things into consideration.

THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING A SERVICE

Someone should welcome people at the door as they arrive and introduce themselves. Reassure carers that you will understand if there are interruptions, or they need to move around. Also, if you have a 'buddy' or Dementia Friend to sit with them, ask if they would like this.

If possible, seating for people with dementia can be within comfortable reach of an exit door, so the person and companion can leave easily, and return knowing they are not being disruptive.

Begin the service with a welcome, and be clear about where you are, why you are there and what will happen. Be sure to smile.

Introduce every part of the service and use prompts. 'Shall we stand and sing' / 'Let us bow our heads in prayer' / 'You will find the Bible reading on your sheet' and so on.

It may be helpful to print out the order of service and each hymn/song in large clear font and remind people to look at it.

Include the traditional version of the Lord's Prayer, two or three well-known hymns and a relevant, short Bible reading.

The sermon should be short, perhaps 5-7 minutes long. (In our experience, if the person is comfortable and settled, services in church can be longer than this. 5-7 minutes is a good length in residential care homes).

Whether your service is within the 'regular' Sunday service, on a separate day, or in a care or nursing home, remember that the person living with dementia may become confused or anxious and may need to move around. A person with dementia who is known to be disorientated and restless at times should always be accompanied by a friend or relative. Allow time and be patient, making every effort to include individuals by using their name, and explain once again why you are there. Make people feel at ease by encouraging participation.

If taking services in care/nursing homes it's good to visit the home a few times in advance, and if possible, sit with people with dementia. Ask the home manager if she has advice for you - is there anything you should know, and if someone starts to disrupt the service, what does the manager advise you to do.

See article on Developing Dementia Ministry to the Elderly by Karen Jennings for more tips on leading a service in Care or Nursing Homes.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Welcome

Good morning and welcome to _____ Church. We are going to worship God today by beginning with the first hymn, 'Praise my soul the king of heaven'. You will find it on your sheet.

Hymn

'Praise my soul the king of heaven' (Henry Francis Lyte 1834)

Prayer

Let's bow our heads and say the Lord's Prayer together.

Hymn

Our second hymn is 'What a friend we have in Jesus'. You can find it on the sheet.

('What a friend we have in Jesus' Joseph Medlicott Scriven 1855)

Scripture reading Psalm 145: 1-10

Now we will have the Bible reading and you can listen as I read. (Preferably use the King James version as it will be relevant to your audience. Use a Bible rather than a phone.)

Sermon*

How wonderful to know that the Lord is near! All we have to do is call to him. He doesn't say that we have to pray with well-chosen words. He assures us in this Psalm that if we truly call upon him, he is near us.

It might be only a cry from our heart. That may have been what it was like when our Lord Jesus, the night before suffering on the cross, said, 'Abba, Father.' Sometimes we also need to call out, turning to our heavenly Father for his help.

Just as our Heavenly Father sent an angel to strengthen our Lord Jesus in his time of great need, he can also minister to us. Psalm 145 assures us that the Lord watches over and keeps us because we love him: 'The Lord preserves all who love him.'

**Sermon and closing prayer taken from Worshipping with Dementia edited by Louise Morse. Used with permission.*

Final hymn

Our final hymn is 'Trust and Obey'. You can find it on the sheet.

('Trust and Obey' John H. Sammis 1887)

Closing prayer

Loving Heavenly Father, thank you that I can call upon you. Thank you for being here for me. Please never let me forget that I can always call upon you as my Father. Thank you that because the Lord Jesus died on the cross for me and rose again, I can never be separated from you. Please help me to remember how near you are every day as you keep me in your love. Amen.

(Finish)

Remind people that this is the end of the service and if you are offering refreshments give a welcome to everyone and clear instructions as how to find them.

FOR FURTHER HELP TO ARRANGE A
DEMENTIA FRIENDLY SERVICE AND
FOR INFORMATION ABOUT GOLUD
CONTACT:

CARYS DAVIES

carys.davies@ebcpcw.cymru

SAMANTHA HODGINS

sam.hodgins@ebcpcw.cymru

SARAH MORRIS

sarah.morris@ebcpcw.cymru

USEFUL INFORMATION FOR CHURCHES
CAN BE FOUND ON THE GOLUD PAGE
ON THE PCW WEBSITE.

BABY BASICS

VALE OF CLWYD



It was a busy year for Baby Basics, Vale of Clwyd - so first of all I would like to thank everyone who has contributed, knitted, crocheted, prayed and otherwise supported us - we appreciate all of you - it is your support that enables us to provide this service.

We had an opportunity to move into a new home in March 2021 (although moving all the boxes of wool blankets wasn't much fun!) - a unit with more storage, sorting and packing space, which has been such a blessing for us considering that we have provided support to over 120 families in the last year. However, we are delighted to remain under the careful wing of the Church of Capel Mawr, Denbigh, which has been supportive of us from the beginning.

This knitting pattern is only a small idea - but we are happy to accept any hand work for babies!

God has been so good to us so far and looking forward, we would like to ask you to pray for the following:

- that enough contributions will continue to come in to provide for all those in need

- that we will have sufficient funding to meet our running costs
- that we will be able to spread the message about our provision to those who need it in the area
- energy, perseverance and joy for our volunteers in working together.

Our work remains busy, so if you would like to offer support in any way - please get in touch.

If you would like to contribute financially, whether monthly or as a 'one-off', it is possible to do so by following the following link: <https://www.stewardship.org.uk/partners/20397064>

You may send your booties to Baby Basics:

Heledd Iago
Glasfryn, Gellifor, Rhuthun, Sir Ddinbych, LL15 1RY

Or send them on to:

Eirian Roberts
Women's Office, Coleg y Bala, Ffordd Ffrydan
Y Bala, LL23 7RY



CLOUD PUFF BOOTIES

Knitting Needle Size 6 or 4 mm

Yarn Weight (3) Light/DK (21-24 stitches to 4 inches)

Gauge 22 sts and 30 rows = 4 ins [10 cm] in stocking stitch

Finished Size 3 mos - to fit infant, 6 mos - to fit infant, 12 mos - to fit infant

MATERIALS LIST

- Softee Baby (140 g/5. oz; 331 m/362 yds), Sizes: 3 mos, 6 mos, 12 mos, Main Color (MC) Flannel (30044) - 1, 1, 1 ball, Contrast A Pink (02001) - 1, 1, 1 ball
- Size 4 mm (U.S. 6) knitting needles or size needed to obtain gauge

INSTRUCTIONS

Booties (make 2 alike)

Sole: With A, cast on 31 (35-39) sts.

1st row: (WS). Knit.

2nd row: K1. M1. K14 (16-18). M1. K1. M1. K14 (16-18). M1. K1. 35 (39-43) sts.

3rd and alt rows: Knit.

4th row: K1. M1. K16 (18-20). M1. K1. M1. K16 (18-20). M1. K1. 39 (43-47) sts.

6th row: K1. M1. K18 (19-22). M1. K1. M1. K18 (20-22). M1. K1. 43 (47-51) sts.

7th to 9th rows: Knit. Break A.

With MC, work 12 (14-16) rows garter st (knit every row).

Shape foot: 1st row: (RS). K11. ssk. K6 (8-10). ssk. K1. K2tog. K6 (8-10). K2tog. K11. 39 (43-47) sts.

2nd and alt rows: Purl.

3rd row: K11. ssk. K4 (6-8). ssk. K1. K2tog. K4 (6-8). K2tog. K11. 35 (39-43) sts.



5th row: K11. ssk. K2 (4-6). ssk. K1. K2tog. K2 (4-6). K2tog. K11. 31 (35-39) sts.

7th row: K11. ssk. K2 (4-6). ssk. K1. K2tog. K2 (4-6). K2tog. K11. 27 (31-35) sts.

Beg with a purl row, work 5 (7-9) rows stocking st, dec 1 st at center of last row. 26 (30-34) sts.

Cuff: 1st row: (RS). K1. *P2. K2. Rep from * to last st. K1.

Rep last until Cuff measures 2 (2¼-2½) in [5 (5.5-6) cm] ending with a RS row.

Cast off loosely in ribbing.

Sew bottom and back seam, reversing seam halfway through ribbing for fold back cuff.

Pompom (make 2)

Wind A around 2 fingers approx 40 times. Remove from fingers and tie tightly in center. Cut through each side of loops. Trim to a smooth round shape. Attach one pom-pom to each Bootie as seen in picture.

Abbreviations - **M1** Make 1 stitch by picking up horizontal loop lying before next stitch and knitting into back of loop

CRAFT

SENSORY BLANKET

SENSORY BLANKET TO KNIT, SEW OR CROCHET FOR CARE HOMES FOR THE ELDERLY.

A sensory/fidget blanket or mat provides a variety of small, interesting objects as a soothing and stimulating activity for people living with dementia or recovering from strokes.

The size of your sensory blanket is up to you; the dimensions below make a blanket or lap mat that can also be tied at the waist with ribbons as an apron or positioned on a table.

When they are ready, offer them to care homes, hospices and hospitals.

SEWING PATTERN FOR SENSORY BLANKET OR LAP MAT

Decorations: Leftover wool, strings, large buttons, zippers, buckles, bells, fabric in different textures, soft toys, squishy and squeaky items, key rings, a pocket, large beads, and more.

Stiff stabilizer, fusible on both sides. – 1 piece 24 X 19 inches or 56 X 47 cm

Fabric – 2 pieces (front and back) – 24 X 19 inches or 56 X 47 cm

Assembly:

Lay first piece of fabric right side up on a table.
Lay second piece of fabric, right side down (on top of first fabric).

Lay stabilizer on top of fabrics.

Sew around and leave one side open.

Turn fabric layers inside out.

Now you have the interfacing between the two layers of the mat fabric.

Finish mat's open side by folding inwards and sewing shut.

Iron the mat well to allow the interface to fuse.

Sew all around the 4 sides of the mat once more to finish the base.

Decorating: Use your imagination; anything interesting and safe is suitable.
Decorations should be securely attached to fabric for safety reasons.

For example: Firmly sew on a zipper, attach buttons, make a button-hole for large buttons with button flaps, sew in a bunch of wool strands (about 7 inches/18cm – to be braided); attach belt and buckle, sew in a fluffy piece of fabric and leather, attach pom-poms, small soft toy.

Some tips: 'Fidget' or Sensory blankets can be quilted, knitted or crochet blankets with different decorations to provide sensory stimulation for residents living with dementia or a lovely gift for those who are not.

- The blanket can be plain, simply to provide warmth and comfort.
- Brightly coloured but not too heavily patterned.
- They can be large to lay across a resident's bed or big enough to lay over a resident's legs.
- Ribbons, beads, buttons, loops, zippers, buckles, pompoms, a pocket or two to put things in etc.
- But keep it simple, too much could be scary or confusing for some residents.
- All decorating items should be securely attached so that residents cannot pull them out.
- Decorative items should be large enough so if residents do manage to pull them off, they can't swallow them.

EXAMPLES OF SENSORY MAT AND BLANKETS

A knitted
memory
blanket



A sewn
sensory mat



Small
crocheted
mats



TRUTH BE TOLD



WHAT IS TRUTH BE TOLD?

Truth Be Told (TBT) is an intergenerational project that brings joy and life into care homes as children from 0-4 years, their parents and residents enjoy telling stories, singing songs and being family together.

We equip churches with the resources, training and support to deliver these groups, aiming to restore intergenerational community which will improve the mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing of everyone involved.

TBT was founded by professional storyteller Gemma Gillard and has won the coveted Cinnamon Network Project Lab 2019 competition for innovative, church-led social action projects that are making a difference to the health and wellbeing of their communities.

WHAT'S THE PURPOSE?

We believe the church is God's beautiful display of family, of intergenerational love and devotion and TBT exists to show *everyone* that they're invited to belong.

HOW CAN TBT BENEFIT OUR CHURCH AND OUR COMMUNITY?

We live in an ageing society and along with increased life expectancy comes an increased risk of loneliness, isolation, marginalisation, ill-health and especially dementia.

Loneliness has become an epidemic in our country too, affecting people of all ages including those in residential care homes who have been found to be twice as likely to be severely lonely as other older adults living in the community.

TBT is like a drawbridge, enabling the church to reach into the community.

Churches can become partners with TBT for a one-off fee and monthly payments and receive training, on-going support, session plans and curriculum, lots of props to get you started and access to the TBT website.



HOW CAN TBT BENEFIT CARE HOMES?

There are many benefits for care homes and their residents:

- making connections and developing relationships with families from the local community
- developing spiritual provision for the residents through connection with local churches
- providing opportunities to socialise, to be physically active, to reminisce
- sessions encourage participation and response, so are cognitively stimulating
- dignity and respect are fostered as all ages have a role and opinions and contributions are valued
- the sessions are fun!

RESIDENTS HAVE THEIR SAY:

Resident, Keith: “The children are so open and full of life. They haven’t been shy about getting involved – or getting us involved too. It’s been great fun.”

Resident, Diana: “I’ve enjoyed every minute of it and can’t wait to see all the children and their lovely parents again.”

Resident and retired maternity nurse, Beryl: “I have held hundreds of babies over the years, but this is the first time I have cuddled a sleeping infant in a very long time. I’m happy as I could possibly be.”

Group mum, Liz: “TBT has become the highlight of my week!”

Three-year-old, Cara: “Please can we come again later?”

SESSION STRUCTURE

TBT follows the same structure each week so that everyone feels familiar and knows what will happen next. Here’s an example:

- 10:30 Families congregate at the care home, sign in and write name labels.
- 10:40 Enter the resident’s lounge, with a song and residents get name labels too.

- 10:45 Group leader introduces the session and everyone is greeted with an imaginative round of ‘hello’s’.
- 10:50 Children pick props from the special TBT bag and they share items with residents. The prop corresponds to a nursery rhyme which everyone sings together.
- 11:00 Story time and all get involved, included and encouraged by it.
- 11:05 All who are able and willing dance to a memorable song.
- 11:10 There is time for a few more pockets, props and songs.
- 11:20 Then we use bubbles, a parachute and a calming song to finish the session. Children are encouraged to go underneath and then to blow bubbles to the residents.
- 11:25 Children receive a sticker with the truth of the day and help to hand out stickers to residents too.
- 11:30 The care home are asked to provide a light lunch for the children, eg, fruit and small sandwiches which are eaten on a picnic blanket. Residents and parents have a cup of tea and the opportunity to socialise.
- 12:00 End of the session and families leave.

FIND MORE INFORMATION ON TBT WEBSITE :

<https://truthbetold.org.uk>

HOPE IN THE LORD

* Verses that tell of the blessings and help that faith in Jesus brings to the believer.

FAITH

Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.
Romans 5:1,2

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. *Hebrews 11:1*

CONTENTMENT

But godliness with contentment is great gain.

For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.
1 Timothy 6:6-8

Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said,
“Never will I leave you;
never will I forsake you.”
Hebrews 13:5

LOVE

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.
1 Corinthians 13:4, 5

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. *1 John 4:7*

GRATITUDE

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. *Colosians 3:15*

Enter his gates with thanksgiving
and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.
For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.
Psalms 100:4,5

PRAYING

And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you he will see that they get justice, and quickly. *Luke 18:7*

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.

And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.
John 14:12-14

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. *1 John 5:14*

NEEDING PEACE

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. *John 14:27*

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!
Philippians 4:4

In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, Lord, make me dwell in safety. *Psalms 4:8*

BROKEN-HEARTED

The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. *Psalms 34:17,18*

He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds. *Psalms 147:3*

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. *1 Peter 5:6,7*

WORRIED

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. *2 Corinthians 1:3,4*

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. *2 Corinthians 4:9*

FEELING INADEQUATE

But, he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."

Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. *2 Corinthians 12:9*

I can do all this through him who gives me strength. *Philippians 4:13*

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. *John 15:5*

LONELY

The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul.

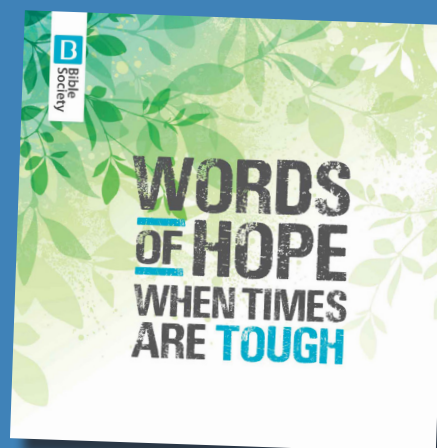
He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. *Psalms 23:1-3*

He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." *Psalms 46:10,11*

* Selection from Gideons New Testament and Psalms. Verses quoted from NIV Bible.

WORDS OF HOPE

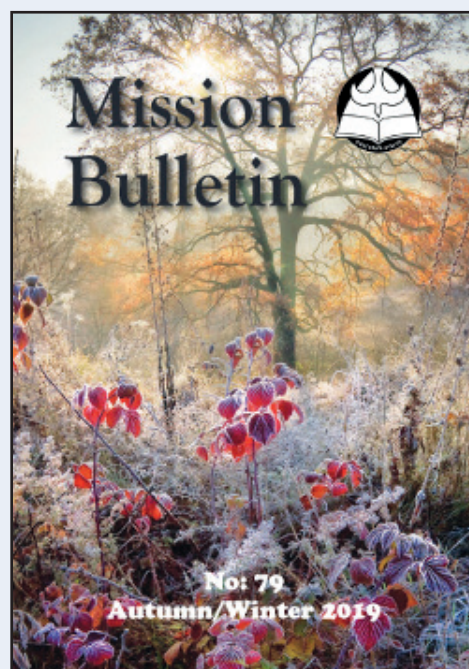
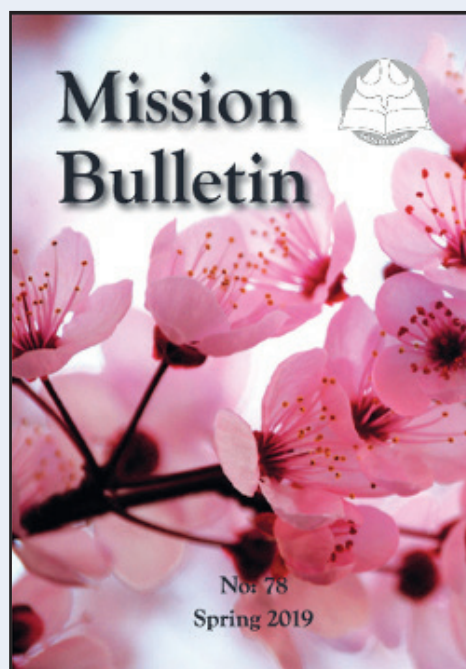
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MISSION BULLETIN



www.ebcpcw.cymru/en/our-mission/women/mission-bulletin

Large print version also available from the Women's Office.

Support

If you wish to send a contribution to:

- [support the mission projects](#)
- [print the theme book](#)

Please send your contribution to Eirian, stating that this is money towards the Women's Mission Projects *MProj22* and / or the costs of the theme book *Thbk22*.

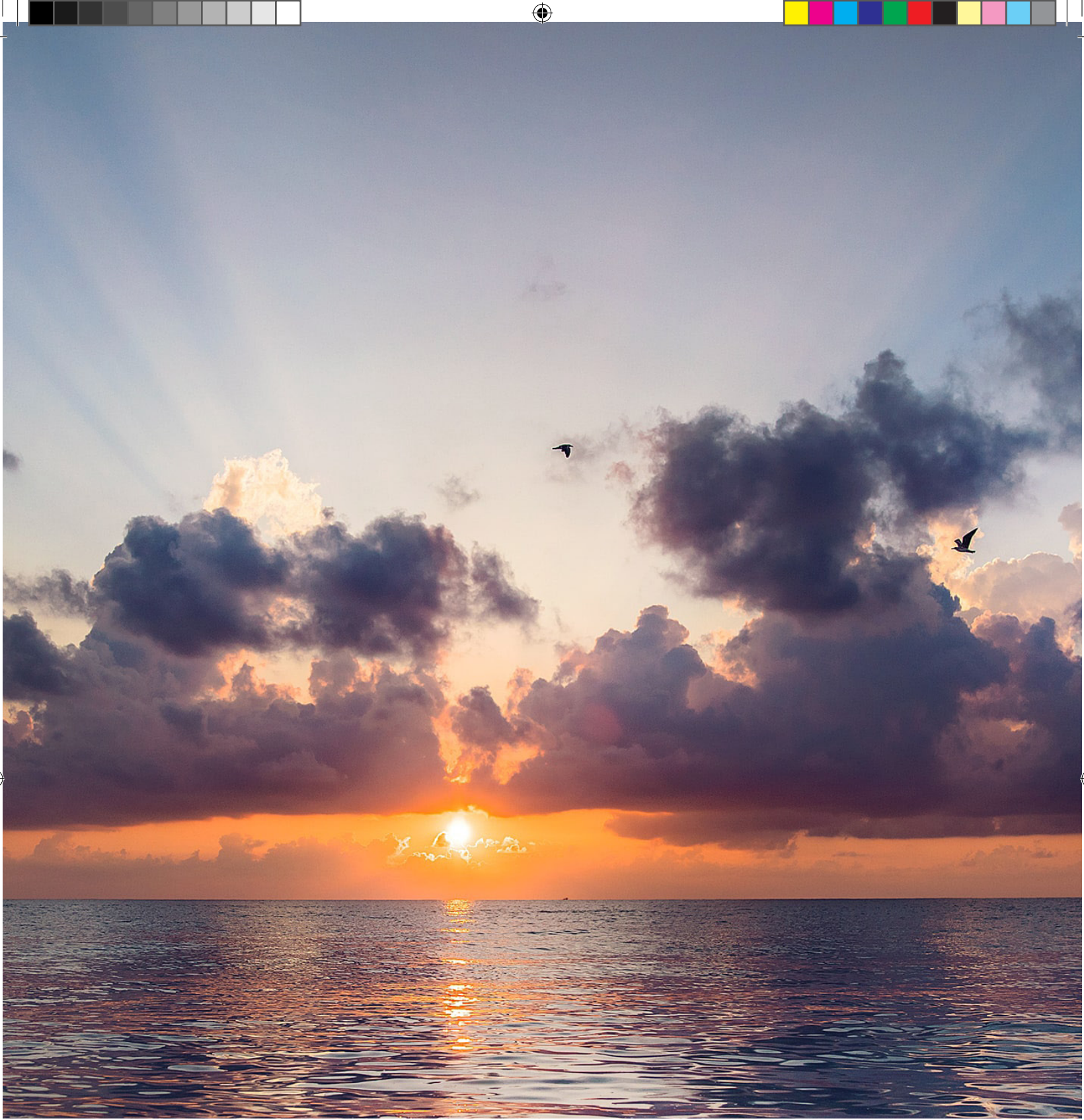
Cheques made payable to 'Adran y Chwirydd Bywyd a Thystiolaeth'
Noting *ProsC22* and/or *LITh22* on the back of the cheque.

Cheques should be posted to Eirian Roberts, Women's Office,
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If you would like more copies of the Theme book for the ladies in your church please let Eirian know. Thank you very much for your support.



I am the



Alpha and the Omega,

the Beginning and the End.

REVELATION 22.13