

Network Issue 07



NEW START, NEW CHURCH

The year? 1995. The area? Colwyn Heights. And the challenge? Setting up children's work on a housing estate where there was virtually no Christian presence.

Reverend Glenys Gough-Hughes was the woman facing this task. But in less than fifteen years, the children's work she started has grown into a small but thriving church which holds all sorts of activities, especially in the local community.

"We started out by leafleting the estate to get children to come," says Reverend Gough-Hughes. "We had 27 kids on the first Sunday!"

"We hired a room to start with, but then we moved to the old Seion chapel building. The church had closed a few years before but the building was available. When we got there, there was no running water or toilet and it was sometimes so cold that the clock stopped!"

After raising sufficient funds, the building was converted into a centre that is suitable for holding a wide range of activities, from Sunday services to toddler groups. Reverend Gough-Hughes is now minister of Seion and of Colwyn Bay church down in the town. Things haven't always been easy, but as she puts it, "We were in the right place at the right time."

"'Belonging' is the big word around here," she adds. "You've got to take people as they are. If they see life in Christ by coming here, then who knows where that can take them?"

"There are a lot of lonely people around here. We try to do something every month

that's a bit different from the usual, things like barbecues, to bring people together. We have a cuppa every Sunday morning so that people can socialise. And we also ask elderly people who are perhaps too old to take part to help by giving them a monthly prayer list and asking them to pray for other people."

"Everything is totally informal," says church secretary Lynn Taylor, who has known Reverend Gough-Hughes for years. "When we had a breakfast to celebrate Easter this year, we only prepared enough for 20 but 38 people turned up. We're not stuffy although the congregation isn't as young as it used to be after a lot of the young people went off to college."

But the children's grandparents and parents are now part of the church and the congregation is keen to experiment with new ideas. The Christmas Pink Baskets Appeal is among the most successful ideas: everyone collects the goods given free on supermarket "buy one get one free" offers. The groceries and a Christmas card from the church are then shared among needy people in the area.

"It's a good opportunity to go in for a chat," explains the minister. "We cooperate with Peniel church in Trefriw and with social services. Last year we distributed 372 bags full of groceries!"

"The important thing is to show Christ to the world, to show people that they can belong here. We try to go out into the community in whichever ways we can. You've got to be on the doorstep. Some people say you can't go outside the chapel walls – but you can!"

CARYS' MISSION ABROAD

Carys Humphreys is originally from Porthmadog but has been a missionary with the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan for over twenty years. She's been talking to Network.

"I'd been a youth worker in Coleg y Bala for ten years, and I was starting to think it was time for a change, but I wasn't quite sure what. Then I saw an advert by the Council for World Mission (CWM) for a secretary with the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan – it was pretty vague – and I thought "this is interesting". But I didn't do anything about it.

"Then a lady from Taiwan came to stay in the College, and about three weeks after she left, I got a letter from her about the work, the language and so on.

"I can only say that it must have come from God, because after getting this letter, I decided to go for it. It was a three year commitment to start with. After I got there I had to spend eight months in the language school learning Taiwanese.

"Since then, I've more or less worked under the General Secretary and in the ecumenical department. When the church takes part in international communications – letters in English and so on – I'm the one who does it. One part of my work is to act almost as a travel agent, arranging missionaries' work and organising international events, and I also help other church departments with English work. Outside work, I share a flat and we offer a place for people to retreat to, somewhere people can come for some peace and quiet.

"PCT has around 1,200 local churches. It's the oldest and largest Protestant church in Taiwan. But Christianity is only 3-4% of the population: Buddhism and Taoism are still strong. But the church's voice is strong: the Presbyterian Church has made a huge impression.

"Taiwan was under Chinese military rule until 1987 and it was a very restrictive country. Even now, we're not part of the United Nations or the World Health Organisation. Taiwan doesn't have its rightful place. During the SARS epidemic in 2003 the WHO wasn't allowed to help Taiwan but China said it would take care of us. But people were dying. China is always a threat, with missiles pointing towards us. And there are tensions after the nationalists won the election last year. They're friends with China. The old fear has resurfaced."

"But economically, Taiwan is well-developed and it's one of the Four Asian Tigers. The standard of health and education is very high. But in terms of numbers, the indigenous people, the tribes, have declined terribly. They're moving into the towns and now PCT is trying to do more with them.

"I have to say – Taiwan is such a homely country. It's wonderful! The main thing I can say is how friendly and warm the people are. I feel completely safe there."

// Please will you pray for Carys, for the PCT's work and for an improvement in Taiwan's political situation?
// The middle photo (by David Reid) shows members of the PCT protesting against the government in May 2009.



HOW ABOUT THAT?

A Minute to Think with Iain Hodgins, Moderator of the Association in the East and co-editor of The Treasury magazine

My wife passed the Daily Telegraph across the table.

“Did you see that piece about Solva?”

Sensing that it must be something extraordinary for a small Pembrokeshire village to fill one third of a page in the news section of a London daily, I read the story for myself. It told how a whole village had reaped the reward of the kindness they had shown to a widow, Margaret Allen, who has recently died, aged 90. Although she had travelled the world, she was happiest in the seaside village where she and her late husband had joined the chapel and local clubs and societies. Now her final wish was to share her £400,000 estate with the community that had shown kindness to her.

My mind turned to those self-explanatory words in the Epistle to the Hebrews:

“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have entertained angels without knowing it.” (Hebrews 13:2)

The people of Solva had no inkling that their kindness to a retired couple would rebound as it did. More often than not our charity will not be so handsomely repaid. Yet Jesus reminds us that love shown to the most insignificant is akin to blessing Him. Not even a mention in someone’s will comes near to that!

“I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for Me.” (Matthew 25:40)

// To read more of Revd Hodgins’ comments, subscribe to The Treasury by contacting Gwasg y Bwthyn, Caernarfon, on 01286 672018.



Carys Humphreys, the Presbyterian Church of Wales’ missionary in Taiwan

SUMMER 2009- WHERE WILL YOU BE?

Whatever your age or holiday plans this year, there’s something for everyone in our summer programme!

ROYAL WELSH SHOW, BUILTH WELLS - 20-23 JULY

Join us for a cup of tea and chat in the Churches’ Tent. There will be a short service every morning and a talk or activity every afternoon.

START SOMETHING TOUR - 25-28 JULY

“I want to prove that Christians can put on something professional, top-notch, cool,” says Aled Ifan, a children and youth worker from Bangor who is organising a series of interdenominational gigs around Wales this summer.

The Repercussion, Society Profiad, Tom Whitman and Steffan Elis will hold four gigs aimed at older children and young people. Here are the Start Something tour dates:

- // July 25 - Berea Newydd Chapel, Bangor
- // July 26 - Morlan Centre, Aberystwyth
- // July 27 - Milkwood Jam, Swansea (18+)
- // July 28 - The Gate, Cardiff

How about taking a mini-bus from your Sunday School or youth club? The gigs will start at 7pm and entry costs £4. For further details or to book tickets, call 07727059761 or visit www.taith09tour.com

MEIRION AND DISTRICT NATIONAL EISTEDDFOD, BALA - 1-8 AUGUST

Come for a coffee and chat at the Uned-IG tent on the Eisteddfod field, where there will be a short service at 11am every morning and activities throughout the day. And if you haven’t been to Coleg y Bala before, here are three great opportunities to call by:

Sunday 2 August, 5pm - Alternative Service: a chance for people of every age to come together to worship God and to listen to the witness of some of Wales’ young people.

Tuesday 4 August, 7pm - Youth Night: tea, music and chat before returning to the caravan or going on to a gig!

Thursday 6 August, 5pm - Activities and Barbecue for Children and Families: rain or shine, bring your kids, your gran or your friends for hours of fun and a bite to eat.

WINDOW ON THE WORLD, URDD CENTRE, LLANGRANNOG - 10-16 AUGUST

Window on the World is a holiday conference which gives Christians of every age a chance to meet with the world-wide church, learn more about God’s mission and grow in their faith. The theme for 2009 is “Take the good news home”, and the conference will ask what is the good news we’ve been invited to share? Why are Christians often reluctant to share the good news? There will be distinguished speakers, a lively band and plenty of opportunities to take advantage of the Urdd Centre’s fantastic facilities.

SOULED OUT, COLEG Y BALA - 14-21 AUGUST

Souled Out Cymru welcomes young people (15+) from all over Wales to Coleg y Bala for a week of great company, dynamic worship, relevant Bible teaching and lots of fun!

This is what some people who attended last year’s Souled Out had to say... “best bit of my holiday” ...“fantastic chance to learn so much about my relationship with Christ and how to develop it” ...“fun!!” ...“I’ve got to know Jesus better” ...“incredibly exciting.”

Visit www.souledoutcymru.net for more information and to watch the promo video!

ANHREFN AWST, COLEG Y BALA - 24-27 AUGUST

A chance for 8-12 year olds to have a great time learning about Jesus Christ and taking part in lots of fun activities. The course is filling up, so contact Coleg y Bala on 01678 520565 to book a place

WHAT CAN I DO?

Current affairs don’t just happen in the news - we can all help change things!

Do you live in a rural area? If so, how far away is the nearest hospital? How does your local health service serve your church members? The National Assembly for Wales has produced a Rural Health Plan in order to help them provide better services all over Wales. They’re calling for responses and are keen to hear from individuals and groups who live and work in rural areas.

For a copy of the Plan, go to www.tinyurl.com/gwledig or contact us (details on page 4).

Whether you live in the country or the town, the recession is effecting us all. The Presbyterian Church of Wales has called on the British and Welsh Prime Ministers to prioritise the Welsh economy during the recession. Relatively poor areas like Wales suffer badly during times like these, and churches are in a position to speak on behalf of some of the most vulnerable members of society.

The ecumenical charity **Church Action on Poverty** works on behalf of churches against poverty. Individual churches can support their work by lobbying their Members of Parliament and Assembly Members - go to www.churchpoverty.org.uk for details.

“The righteous care about justice for the poor” (Proverbs 29:7)

For more information about any of the above, contact us!



The seven members of the new Sunday school at Soar, Pontyberem

SUNDAY SCHOOLS: CHANGING TIMES

How has the Sunday school changed over recent decades? Marian Williams has a look over some of the old and new activities held at Capel Newydd, Llanddarog.

I can easily cast my mind back to the 1950s when going to the Sunday school was an integral part of the week. It was a social event as all my friends went to Sunday school. I remember that there were two classes of small children in the vestry, where I was to begin with of course, and four classes in the chapel.

At Christmas time, there would be a Competitive Meeting, with two well-known judges coming to weigh up the singing and reciting by 2 o’clock on Christmas day. After about two hours’ competing, everybody would go up to the vestry for a tea party. Some paper decorations would be hung up, but no sign of a Christmas tree or balloons. Then it was back to the chapel for the concert. The afternoon’s winners would take to the stage again, along with other items of song and recitation. By the evening, the chapel would be full; the neighbourhood coming together.

A new activity which has been earmarked in the Sunday school calendar for around five years now is the Mothering Sunday celebration. The mothers (and fathers) are invited to the Sunday school. The children take part at the beginning of the Sunday school as usual. Then everyone goes to the vestry, where the tables are brimming with sweet treats to go with a cup of tea, coffee or fruit juice. It’s an opportunity for the young parents to experience the Sunday school and a chance for babies to come for the first time. The children love to welcome their parent to Sunday school.

We hold an annual Sunday school quiz. We took part in the national quiz for a number of years, but in 2002 the older team won the all-Wales competition. Coaching them was an experience which I won’t forget.

Much change has occurred over the years. The Christmas Concert is holding its own, but not on Christmas day of course. There hasn’t been a monthly children’s service for years but the local Sunday schools have a Development Officer to help introduce and expand activities. The

biggest change has been all the attractive, colourful resources now available, along with the new methods of transferring information. But despite this, it is difficult to maintain regular attendance in the Sunday school. The membership of Capel Newydd Sunday school in the early 1940s was nearly 100. Today there are 35 on the register, 23 children and 12 adults. But - we won’t lose heart!

But not every Sunday school has such a long history. At nearby Soar, Pontyberem, there is a brand new Sunday school. Ann Davies explains how and why.

Since September 2008 the notices during the morning service include the fact that Sunday school will follow the service. This is a source of great joy to all the members of Soar. Those words hadn’t been said for over eight years!

September 2008 was the turning point, as our minister, Reverend Trefor Lewis, invited the parents of children he’d christened to meet to discuss the possibility of restarting the Sunday school. Five parents came to the meeting - each with a close connection to Soar and each having been to Sunday school themselves when they were younger. We decided to hold the Sunday school every fortnight as some of the children lived miles away - in fact, as far away as Cardiff!

There are seven children on the register at the moment and their chattering and laughing once again fills the vestry and brings a smile to the faces of everyone within earshot. The parents are welcome to remain in the vestry with their children and we have feel that we belong to one big family.

At Soar, Pontyberem, we’re seeing a flicker of hope after the lean times and we’re already looking forwards to the Sunday school trip in the summer. I wonder where we’ll go to?

If you need advice on how to set up a youth club or Sunday school, contact Gwyn Rhydderch, Director of the Youth and Children’s Service, on 01758 770490 or at rhydderch@tesco.net.

// There is a photo of the children and mothers of Capel Newydd Sunday school on page 1.



The group from northern Carmarthenshire having a good time at Llanw

LLANW: FULL OF HOPE

During the Easter holidays a group of young people from northern Carmarthenshire went on a day trip to the Urdd centre, Llangrannog, for Llanw Christian festival. This Welsh-language festival attracts Christians of all ages to celebrate faith and to deepen their relationship with Christ.

A large number had gathered from all over Wales and many of them were young people. What was striking was the joy that pervaded the worship. The young leaders evidently loved to worship God and praised his goodness and endless love.

As well as attending the morning service the young people attended youth sessions. These were fun and lively and included a variety of games, teaching and discussion. The method of communication was lively and really appealed to the young people.

But it wasn’t all about worship and learning. The afternoon was spent enjoying Llangrannog’s facilities, including skiing, go-carting, motorbikes and trampolining. We had good food, a football match against a group from north Wales and a lot of fun.

In a time when Christianity has a very negative image among young people, this was a great advert for the faith. When it was time to go home, many of our group wanted to stay for the rest of the week! Unfortunately, that wasn’t possible, but one thing is certain - we’ll have to hire a mini-bus (if not two) for another trip to Llanw next year.

Nigel Davies, Youth/Children’s Officer, Northern Carmarthenshire Interdenominational Enterprise

STOP!...IN THE NAME OF GOD

Dozens of churches opened their names on Pentecost Saturday, inviting both their members and members of the public to stop in the name of God by coming in to pray and meditate.

“At times like these, as we consider the situation of the church and the wider society, the churches used this year’s Pentecost celebrations to bow down and seek God’s presence”, said Reverend Dafydd Andrew Jones, Director of the Life and Witness Board.

Representatives from a number of churches, including Montgomery and Holy Trinity, Barry, said that the experience had encouraged them to consider opening their doors on a more regular basis.

“It was a great success, not in terms of numbers perhaps, but the minister had prepared bilingually, we had a huge banner outside and the nearby shopkeepers came to tell us how pleased they were to see the chapel open,” said Nerys Biddulph of Rehoboth chapel, Prestatyn. “People got prayer points as they came in then sat down to pray before going on to the vestry for a cuppa and a chat then back through the chapel. What touched me was that some people stopped to pray again. This was a renewal for us as members too, and we’re planning on organising something similar in the future.”

THE TREASURY: CAN YOU HELP?

Since April the price of a stamp has gone up so the cost of posting The Treasury, the Presbyterian Church of Wales’ monthly paper, has also increased.

As The Treasury only costs 40p and a second class stamp costs 30p, we’re asking readers to kindly consider whether one person from their church could receive copies on behalf of all subscribers in order to cut down on mailing costs.

If you think this may be possible, please contact Gwasg y Bwthyn, Caernarfon, on 01286 672018. Thank you!



Children from Llanberis, Llanrug and Bethel at Coleg y Bala

DIARY

July

- 20-22 Healing Ministry Summer School
- 20-23 Royal Welsh Show
- 20-24 Youth Course, Coleg y Bala
- 24-28 Start Something tour

August

- 1-8 National Eisteddfod, Meirion and District
- 10-16 Window on the World, Llangrannog
- 14-21 Souled Out, Coleg y Bala

24-27 Anhrefn Awst, Coleg y Bala

September

- 7-9 General Assembly, Lampeter
- 7-10 Healing Ministry Retreat, Coleg Trefeca
- 9 History Lecture, Lampeter

Further details can be found on our website: www.ebcpcw.org.uk

BELIEF BAROMETER RESULTS

Did you see the Belief Barometer back in January's issue? We made eleven faith-related statements and asked readers to tell us whether or not they agreed with them.

It is unfair to try and pigeonhole faith into "Yes" or "No" boxes, but it was interesting to see what statements people agreed and disagreed on. However, the number of responses received means that these results are probably not representative of the views of the general PCW membership!

It was encouraging to find that none of the respondents was angry with God and that over 90% pray regularly. Everybody who responded believed in life after death.

But not all matters were as clear-cut. The creation debate rages on, with a quarter believing in the creation as described in Genesis, a third ticking both boxes or saying they wanted a third option and the others saying they believed in evolution.

There was a 50-50 split between those who believed that the Bible is completely true and others who disagreed.

For questions which involved a supernatural element, such as the virgin birth, Jesus' miracles and the resurrection, between 70% and 80% said that they believed these events had happened as described. Only one person believed that other religions are not acceptable to God, although several respondents did not believe that they are wholly acceptable either.

"Capel y Morfa, Aberystwyth, sent in thoughtful responses which considered each question in its biblical context. They referred to the Tower of Babel, the Holy Trinity and "eye for an eye", and even to Darwin and the Early Church.

All in all, an interesting experiment!

LLANRUG, BETHEL AND LLANBERIS COURSE

Over the last weekend in April a group of children from Llanrug, Llanberis and Bethel came over to Coleg y Bala. The weekend's theme was Dafydd the poet, the shepherd, the King. We heard about Dafydd the young shepherd being selected to be king and, with God's support, defeating Goliath the giant in battle. We also had an opportunity to reflect on Psalm 23 and learn a lot about God's care for us, especially when things are tough. We were all challenged by the question "Have you got room in your heart for God?" in our busy daily lives. The kids had obviously loved coming here to learn so much about God and had really enjoyed all the activities, and we as staff are looking forwards to welcoming them all back soon!

Eleri Jones

ONE OF THE NATION'S GREATS

Lewis Edwards was the founder of Coleg y Bala, one of Wales' great educators and the man responsible for uniting the Calvinist Methodist churches of north and south Wales under one General Assembly.

To celebrate the bicentenary of his birth, Professor Densil Morgan will discuss Lewis Edwards' contribution to Wales in the Presbyterian Church of Wales' annual history lecture at Lampeter University at 11:45am on Wednesday 9 September. A distinguished theologian, Professor Morgan is currently writing a critical biography of Lewis Edwards, so the lecture is sure to be interesting and challenging.

A warm welcome to all.

BACK TO CHURCH SUNDAY

On 27 September 2009, thousands of people will be inviting someone special back to church with them. People lose touch with church for all sorts of reasons but many would come back with an invitation.

On Back to Church Sunday 2008, people in 3,000 churches all over Britain and beyond invited and welcomed back 37,000 friends.

This year for the first time, the Presbyterian Church of Wales will take part in Back to Church Sunday. Hundreds of our members will invite a friend to chapel with them and the churches will make a special effort to welcome friends old and new. Every church taking part will get a resources pack worth £20 to help them organise the event.

It's not too late for your church to take part in Back to Church Sunday! Contact the central office for further details.

A VISIT TO DR. OLIVE'S

Penbryn, Holywell, is a small church – but it's still big enough to have a Kids' Club! The club spent the last meeting of the term discovering the wonders of the huge garden and interesting home of Dr. Olive Frost, who lives near the chapel.

Dr. Olive's home is a treasure trove of furniture from all over the world as she has taken every opportunity to travel abroad as part of her work as a doctor – a practical Christian doing the small things.

The church held a special family service on 7 June to share the club's experiences with the other members and to thank the children for their loyalty. The club members come from Gwenffrwd School as the church is opposite the school. The club meets for an hour on Tuesday straight after school. Very convenient!

ANAGRAM PUZZLE

These men can be found in the Old Testament. But who are they?

Eh? I'm a hen! _____

Hit goal _____

Hard cash _____

No mass _____

A lush theme _____

Hi Asia! _____

Razzle bathes _____

Mob a hero _____

COMMENTS? NEWS? ADVERTISEMENTS?

Let us know!

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