

# Vision

From St Catherine's Church, Gorseinon  
Ebrill April 2020 | Rhifyn Issue 008



Questions asked & answered at Alpha



Eco Church Group inspiring



Blessing of the local lifeboat



## Contact a member of our team

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The Vicar takes a day off every Friday, so please be aware that any messages left will not be attended to until the next working day. In the event of an emergency only, please contact a Warden.

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## Book our Facilities

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Our Facilities, which include a large Hall, several smaller meeting rooms and well equipped modern kitchen, are available for hire throughout the week. All our facilities offer wi-fi connectivity. Check availability at [www.stcath.org.uk](http://www.stcath.org.uk).

## Contributions for the Magazine

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Anyone wishing to contribute an article for the next edition of *Vision* should contact a member of the Editorial Team:

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Contributions can also be sent to [vision@stcath.org.uk](mailto:vision@stcath.org.uk)



Hello!

If you are self-isolating,  
we can help.

If you need help with urgent medical supplies, with shopping or if you'd like a weekly call then get in touch and we will do our best to help.

If you're not already receiving a weekly call, contact Rob Samuel who is co-ordinating our team of callers.

# Welcome

**C**roeso i'r rhifyn diweddaraf o gylchgrawn *Vision* sydd, ymhlith pethau eraill, yn cofio am lwyddiant ein dathliadau Gŵyl Ddewi gyda Chawl a Chân yng nghwmni poblogaidd Parti Llwchwr.

As we entered lockdown the parishes of Gorseinon and Loughor united to become the Parish of Casllwchwr and Gorseinon, giving us an opportunity to celebrate our shared inheritance of faith and to look forward to the future together. We are one church, the family of God meeting in three different locations—St Catherine's, St David's and St Michael's and together we are seeking to be famous for love (for God and each other). This may seem like a strange time to create a new parish, but in fact the risen Jesus birthed the Church in isolation. He met with the disciples while they were locked away for fear of what was going on outside and what might be coming to get them. He gave them His peace and the gift of the Holy Spirit and that changed everything! Fearful disciples became bold proclaimers of the Good News about Jesus. As we move forward together, I hope we can discover a new boldness and courage to share the Gospel afresh.

In this edition, we celebrate the baptism of Morgan Gareth John Ridler, the newest member of our Church family. We also celebrate how *Alpha* is helping people get to grips with some of the big questions of life and faith and enabling them to grow as Disciples of Jesus.

We look back at some exciting events over the last few months, including the Mabsant festival in St Michael's with the Loughor Lifeboat crew and the well attended Christingle and Live Nativity events for children and families over Christmas. We also share how a new *Open the Book* project will see us taking familiar Bible stories into local schools.

You can also learn more about how the new Food for All project is giving people the opportunity to put their faith into action by providing free packed meals for some of the most needy and vulnerable people in our community. Another person putting her faith into action is Janet Rowe, a member of our Church family who has discovered a passion for fostering. Find out more about the ups and downs of this challenging but rewarding vocation as she shares part of her story with us.

We also look back at the Care for the Family Bereavement Care Awareness Course which we hosted recently and we celebrate the lives of three much loved members of our Church family, Enid Cunnah, George Connor and Gledwyn Jones, who all passed away recently.

So, take some time away from your busy schedule, put up your feet, enjoy a cuppa and a really good read.

With all my love, as always,

*Adrian*

# Alpha helps people get to grips with some of the big questions

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More than twenty-five people have got together at St Catherine's in recent weeks to explore some of the big questions of life and faith through Alpha, questions like 'Who is Jesus?', 'Why did Jesus die?', 'How can I have faith?', 'Why and how should I pray?', 'Why and how should I read the Bible?', and 'How does God guide us?'

Each week guests have enjoyed a home-cooked meal, before watching a short video exploring one of the big questions and then delving deeper in informal small group chats. No answer is the wrong answer and people are always free to share as much or as little as they like, and to say whatever they like too!

The group is made up of some people who have been attending St Catherine's for many years, as well as some new faces who are dipping their toes in to see what Christianity is all about for the very first time.

Barbara Howells, who has been attending St Catherine's for many years, said that she came along hoping to explore her own opinions about God and to listen to others. "I have not been disappointed and

in addition, I've also made a few new friends," she said.

Another regular worshiper who attended Alpha was Mary Shorthouse. She shared how she had been trying to read the Bible on her own for some time, but didn't always find it easy to understand but she now planned to try *Bible in One Year*, a resource which splits the Bible into small bite-size chunks each day and gives an easy-to-understand commentary to help us see how those passages are relevant to our lives today.

"The course has been really helpful for me," Mary said.

"I have been trying to read the Bible on my own for some time, but now I'm inspired to try *Bible in One Year*."

A big part of Alpha is the small group and as the weeks go by, people forge strong friendships and get to know each other really well by sharing a meal, followed by a cuppa and a must-have piece of cake! As friendships are made and strengthened, the conversation became more lively and it's often punctuated by raucous laughter. But unlike listening

to a Sunday sermon, Alpha gives everyone a chance to say what they think in a friendly, non-threatening environment.

Someone who particularly enjoyed the small group conversation was Sue Long.

“I’ve really enjoyed the course,” Sue said.

“I did Alpha at another Church but we didn’t have the opportunity to discuss the topics as much as we’ve been able to do here. It has really benefited me.”

For many, Alpha helps them to get to grips with Christianity for the very first time, and it is a life changing experience. Both Katy Cox and Sarah Fowler have benefited immensely from it.

“Everyone has been so welcoming and I’ve learned a lot,” said Katy who is exploring Christianity for the first time.

“It’s opened my eyes to Christianity and I can honestly say that it’s changed my life,” she added.

For some, like Sarah, Alpha is an opportunity to get to grips with some of the burdens that prevent us from living life to the full, which is God’s heart for us.

“I have absolutely loved the Alpha Course,” Sarah shared.

“My confidence has grown and I’m now able to speak about God. The topic of ‘Forgiveness’ was particularly difficult for me, but I have finally been

able to forgive myself and I feel that God has lifted a burden.”

A special retreat day at Nicholaston House in Gower at the beginning of March offered Alpha guests an opportunity to step away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life for a moment and to enjoy a much needed break. As well as taking in the beautiful views and enjoying the tranquility of the place, we were able to learn more about the Holy Spirit, exploring questions like, ‘Who is the Holy Spirit?’, ‘What does the Holy Spirit do?’ and ‘How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit?’

Because the small group discussions have been so enjoyable, many have asked if they can continue in some way after Alpha, so as a result we are going to be launching a second Connect Group, a small group giving people the opportunity to worship, study the Bible and pray together during the week.

We currently have one Connect Group meeting on a Thursday at 7pm, but are in the process of setting up another. For more information on Connect Groups, visit our website: [www.stcath.org.uk/connect-groups](http://www.stcath.org.uk/connect-groups) or look out for more details on our weekly bulletin.



# Joy as Morgan is welcomed into the family of the Church



Natalie Ridler, who worships at our Welsh service on a Sunday, reflects on the baptism of her son, Morgan Gareth John Ridler.

On Sunday 12 January, there was a really exciting, joyful vibe in St Catherine's as Morgan Gareth John Ridler was welcomed into the family of the Church.

Reflecting on the special day, Morgan's mum, Natalie, who worships with us at our Welsh Language service on a Sunday said, "During my pregnancy I very much looked forward to the day I would be able to baptise my son and introduce him to Jesus."

"Baptisms in our family had always been big events and, as a regular worshiper at St Catherine's Welsh Language Service on a Sunday morning, I knew that my son would be welcomed into a kind and supportive Church family."

Within months of Morgan's birth, Natalie was keen to meet with Adrian, the Vicar, to begin making arrangements for his Baptism.

"Having known Adrian since our school days and watched his approach to taking on the church, I looked forward to arranging the big day. Morgan was born in July 2019, and following a few months of adjusting to motherhood, I was really keen for us to meet and start planning the big day."

"Adrian was very accommodating and helped

us think through the big commitment of baptism. Morgan was baptised in Welsh and our family came from across the country to celebrate with us."

During the Baptism, Adrian reflected on Jesus' baptism by John in the Jordan, which we find in Matthew 3.13-17.

"Jesus comes up from the water, the Spirit of God descends on Him like a dove, and a voice from heaven says, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.' This tells us something about Jesus and it tells us something about us and who we are as Christians," Adrian said.

"Firstly, it reminds us that Jesus is the image of the invisible God. If we want to see what God looks like and to know the depths of His love for us, then we look at Jesus."

"But it reminds us too that through our baptism, we share in the identity of Jesus. We are God's beloved children and He is our Father. There is nothing that we can do to earn that love, or to deserve it. It is a gift and all we need to do is accept it."

"Morgan is known, is valued and loved by God no matter what. But we don't want him to take our word

for it, we want him to know the power of that love for himself, which is why we are going to encourage his parents and godparents to keep the promises that they will make for Morgan today—promises to pray for him, to read the Bible with him and to draw him, by their own example, into God’s family, the Church.”

Natalie explained how she was excited to see all of her friends and family join her Christian family, the Church, to celebrate this important milestone in the life of her son, Morgan.

“It was very exciting to see all of my family crowded outside our lovely church. Many commented on the beauty of it and the ‘wonderful atmosphere’ inside,” she said.

It was particularly significant that her grandmother was able to be there on the day as it was she who has nurtured Natalie’s own faith, encouraging her to come along to church since she was a child.

“My grandmother was particularly pleased to be there as it was she who took me to church as a child and as such she was very pleased to see me continue my journey as a Christian and providing a path into Christianity for my son too.”

Morgan wore a lace christening gown that was over fifty years old. His mum, his grandmother and various other members of the family have all been baptised in it.

“It was a lovely nod to the past and to the future,” his mum said.

“Morgan’s smile was permanent throughout the whole service which showed how comfortable he was being in St Catherine’s.”

“Having Morgan as the centre of a Sunday service

was a great privilege and to share it with both my family and our church family was very special. My mother was particularly touched when Morgan was taken down the aisle and introduced to his church family. She really felt he was going to be adored forever by everyone there.”

“The feeling of unconditional acceptance and love is so important for a child during childhood and being part of the St Catherine’s family will go a long way to help me deliver that for Morgan. Thank you to all who contributed and attended, and a special thank you to Adrian for a very apt and inspiring sermon, as well as welcoming us so lovingly into the arms of the church.”

Morgan’s special day was captured in beautiful pictures by Tom Hart Photography, which Morgan and his family will no doubt treasure as the years go by.

After the service, Morgan and his family joined the Church family in the Hall for some light refreshments, which went down a real treat.

“Seeing the Church Hall full of my family, friends and church members, all interacting and sharing a cuppa, was very heart warming,” Natalie said.

If you’re thinking about Baptism at St Catherine’s, you may wish to visit our website for more information in the first instance: [www.stcath.org.uk](http://www.stcath.org.uk). When you are ready, you can begin to make the arrangements with the Vicar and, don’t worry, we believe in a God of welcome and unconditional love, so we never say no!



# The most wonderful time of the year!

## Rowena Dalrymple, our Children, Youth and Families Paster reflects on her first Christmas with us in Gorseinon.

With Christmas now feeling like it's long behind us and the last of the Christmas decorations have been (finally) packed away, I've had some time to reflect on my first Christmas spent in St Catherine's.

On December 8th we held our Messy Christingle service. The afternoon began in the hall with an array of activities for ninety children and their families to take part in. As soon as they opened the doors they were greeted by Clare, who gave them their individual activity card and set them the challenge of getting stuck into every craft, and correctly guessing the number of jelly babies, marshmallows and chocolate eggs in large jars. So families set to work making red ribbon hearts and marshmallow crosses that reminded them of Jesus' love for them, and colouring in spinning tops, highlighting that although each one of us is unique and different from everybody else, God cares for us all the same amount. All children had a go at creating their very own Christingle Orange, wrapped in red ribbon and dripping with sweets to represent Jesus and all the good things he gives us. The atmosphere was such

a buzz as families raced around to each the different stations, completing their activity cards and pondering over the sweet jars, hoping they would be the ones to take them home.

After an hour in the hall, once all activity cards were completed and handed into Clare for verification (we know how valuable sweets are in Gorseinon) we headed over into the church. The stage was lit up from the lights on the Christmas tree and a large electric candle from the giant Christingle Orange I constructed (a good use for my orange pilates exercise ball) at the side of the stage. The service was full of festive hymns and I had the chance to share a story about a dad who received a Christmas present box from his daughter and was a bit disappointed when he opened it and there was nothing inside it. Or was there? For his loving daughter had filled it full of love and kisses for her dad - more meaningful and precious than







any material gift she could have wrapped up. And Jesus is like this gift. His free but personally costly gift of his love and forgiveness for all the times we've messed up with God, friends, family, other people and the planet may seem like that dad's empty box when compared it to the sparkle and attraction of other things we look forward to at Christmas, but as the dad found out, it's the best gift you will ever be offered.

Later on, for me, a beautiful moment was watching as the children lined up and down the central aisle, having their homemade Christingles lit in the darkness and singing together. The peacefulness of this moment was interrupted as the service came to an end and the winners of the three sweet jars were announced. Three very happy children went home, including potentially the youngest child present who was only a few months old! Once the service was over, we moved back over to the church hall, where we enjoyed party food and milkshakes!

My second highlight was the Sunday before Christmas when we held our live nativity service. The children in Explorers had spent the Sundays in December leading up to the service baking and constructing a fantastic three-dimensional nativity scene from gingerbread and sweets, complete with baby Jesus sleeping in a shredded wheat covered

manger, donkeys with evidence of chocolate raisin poops and colourful stars in the sky line, which was proudly on display at the front of church. They had also been hard at work rehearsing lines for their respective parts within the nativity itself.

Myself, Clare and Lily, one of our Explorers youth narrated the story of the first Christmas, which was told in a rhyme. As we moved through the different scenes and introduced new characters, children who had attended the service and chosen to dress up in their favourite Nativity character joined the Explorers cast and we watched the story come to life. This even included one donkey and roman soldier. The service was interspersed with well known carols accompanied by the excellent Penclawdd Brass Band as the story unfolded, leading up to the birth of Jesus in the stable and the visits from the shepherds and wise men.

The children really enjoyed being a part of the service, but most of them said their highlight was definitely seeing Snowy, a real life donkey who came and joined us in church to be part of our crib scene. If there was an Oscar to be given, Snowy would have won for his authenticity of character, as he chose to use the bathroom right at the moment Jesus was born! Thankfully he restrained from eating the gingerbread nativity scene.



# New 'Food for All' Project helps to meet real needs



Richard Lake gives us an insight into the new *Food for All* Project, how it works and how it is benefiting people in our community who are in real need.

Responding to a very real need in our community, the newly established *Food for All* project relies on donations from local shops and supermarkets of goods that they are no longer able to sell at the end of the trading day. These goods are fit for human consumption but may be in damaged packaging, split multi packs that cannot be sold, fruit or vegetables that need to be used in the following days due to damage. We also have donations of bread and cakes.

At St Catherine's a dedicated team of volunteers collect the food from supermarkets, sort through the produce and produce fresh ready meals for those in greatest need in our community, for example by turning vegetables into a wholesome, heartwarming soup.

All donations are stored in accordance with local and national food hygiene regulations and the volunteers hold a minimum of Level 2 Food Hygiene qualifications.

The *Food for All* project provides a service for everyone regardless of creed, ethnicity, religious belief, gender, age, ability and social status.

People accessing this service may be in need due to financial restrictions associated with access to social support benefits, financial and food hardship, difficulty leaving the home as well as social isolation.

Referrals to the service can be made directly by individuals, by local food banks, local support groups, local authority, healthcare professionals, and religious organisations. We accept referrals from anyone who is aware of a person in need.

The scheme currently operates in the Gorseinon, Gowerton, Penllergaer, Pontarddulais, Grovesend and Llanelli areas but the scheme will turn no one away, regardless of where they live.

"There is nothing like this in the area where I live. I have accessed the Food-bank on three occasions in the last six months and I am no longer allowed to access this again until the end of this six month period. Without your support my family would go without food," one young woman who had benefited from the project said.

Currently food donations are available on the working days of the scheme which is a Wednesday and can be collected in person from the Church Hall

or are delivered by volunteers directly to the homes of those in need.

Financial donations are accepted and are needed to purchase consumables such as food bags and containers to make soups as well as other foods to distribute. All funds and donations are invested into the scheme to support those in the greatest need.

All referrals are confidential and the information provided is kept private in accordance with Data Protection and GDPR regulations. No information on referral forms is shared with third party organisations.

We have been fortunate that this also has been a blessing to the Wednesday morning congregation. One worshiper commented, “The Wednesday morning service is like a family and having a coffee and food after the service gives me someone to talk to instead of going home alone.”

“I look forward to a Wednesday to see my friends and chat, so I am not alone and this has helped my depression a lot,” said another who comes along on a Wednesday to meet others and enjoy a cuppa.

There are currently a number of individuals and families who have food delivered to their homes. One lives in a shared house after being homeless for a number of years. He had difficulty accessing food banks as he had also used his three visits in six months. Before he had food from the project, he would go without a meal for up to six days in a week.

One day per week his support worker would take him for a meal. He said, “Thank you for all you have done for me. I actually have a full belly and have started to gain some weight again. I lost so much weight through not eating. You’re truly wonderful people and there should be more like you in the world.”

Another young mother who has accessed the project has a family of six; she has been waiting for payments of benefits and is struggling to survive on the money she has. She said, “I have a choice after all the bills are paid. Use the £11 per month that is left to pay the gas and electricity or to buy food. You have helped me to keep going in these dark days.”

Whilst much of the food we receive comes from local shops and supermarkets for free, we do rely on the goodwill of people across the community who have enabled us to purchase a new fridge, a freezer and the other ingredients and packaging needed to continue to provide soups and fresh ready meals made from the donated produce.

“The soups were gorgeous and gave me something tasty, nutritious and different to eat other than having to eat the same thing day in day out,” said one man who lives alone.

In January the project was able to help 30 families and individuals. By February we helped 72 families and individuals by providing 159 meals from donations and by providing the soups and other food the scheme produces.



# Helping people to grieve well

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I was very proud that on 16 November 2019 St Catherine's became one of many churches across the UK to undertake Care for the Family's Bereavement Care Awareness Course, which seeks to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding churches have in providing appropriate levels of ongoing support to people who have been bereaved after the death of a close family member or friend. This is something I am very passionate about as I know first hand the life altering agony of having to grieve and then rebuild my life after the death of my first husband, Gareth, seven years ago in 2013. Ongoing support is needed days, weeks, months and even years after the funeral has taken place.

Thirty-three people joined Adrian and myself in the Hall to hear from Care for the Family's facilitators Joy and Bob, from Cardiff, share their own personal experience of grief, as well as the professional knowledge they have built up along the way. Several people had travelled from churches as far away as Bangor to be there.

We looked at what grief can commonly but uniquely look like to an individual, with conflicting emotions such as shock, sadness, despair, fear and relief, hope and even joy. How physical bodies can be affected via nausea, panic, anxiety, chest

pain, headaches and the inability to sleep. It is not uncommon to have psychological reactions to loss, such as depression, thoughts of guilt, and not wanting to socialise, and of course behaviours change; grieving people may cry, need to talk repeatedly about what's happened to them, keep really busy or not get out of bed, and do things that are out of character in the new world they are living in. People may run to God for comfort and strength or run from him in hurt and anger. All are common reactions, and all are valid.

Bob explained that everyone's grief journey is unique, and dependant on many complex factors so each bereaved person needs to know that it's ok to deal with their bereavement in a way that works for them, not based on other people's expectations. Those of us supporting the bereaved must keep this at the forefront of our minds.

I was glad this course covered some 'theory' about grieving too, and shared a model I have personally found incredibly helpful on my grief journey. It's called Tonkin's model and Bob explained it as he held up a small jar with a black ball completely filling it. He explained that the black ball represents grief, and the insides of the jar, life. Initially, when we lose a loved one the black ball of grief completely fills





and consumes all aspects of life. There is no room for anything else. Over time you may think that the black ball of grief will shrink until it is only a small part of the life that is still the same, but you would be wrong. The black ball does not shrink. Instead the jar of a grieving person's life gets bigger, and a new, unwanted, but different and good life is built around the grief. Yep, that's what's happened to me. I miss Gareth as much now as I did when I lost him seven years ago, but wow, how much new life I have grown around my black ball, such as taking up outdoor swimming, changing careers, developing new friendships and most recently, happily settling into Gorseinon life with Adrian.

After lunch we split into groups and looked at some real life case studies of bereaved families, and began to think on a practical and personal note how we, in our church communities could specifically help them. It highlighted that each bereaved person's needs will be different, and what's needed is a compassionate, individual approach in caring for them. One family may benefit from having meals cooked for them, another, having help babysitting



children so they can attend a counselling session. Maybe the best thing we could do was offer a non-judgemental listening ear and direct them to other professional services they may benefit from. We all agreed we all wanted to create a culture in churches where it is 'okay to not be okay' so that people don't feel they must suffer in silence.

Feedback from the day was positive, with participants stating they were going back to their churches with the desire to discuss further how they could provide ongoing bereavement ministries, such as setting up a regular drop in bereavement cafe, or ensuring Care for the Family and other bereavement organisation's information leaflets are easily accessible in public spaces within their church buildings. Those of us from St Catherine's hope to use this course to develop our bereavement pastoral care going forward.

Care for the Family also offers befriending services and support days and weekends for those widowed young, for parents after the death of their child, and sibling bereavement support. More information about these and other services they have for supporting and strengthening families can be found at [www.careforthefamily.org.uk](http://www.careforthefamily.org.uk)

Other useful bereavement support services include [ataloss.org](http://ataloss.org) where you can type in your postcode, and the type of bereavement support you are looking for and it will tell you what is available to you locally. They also have specific bereavement support for men which can be accessed at [www.ataloss.org/support-for-men](http://www.ataloss.org/support-for-men) or contact [roger@ataloss.org](mailto:roger@ataloss.org).

If you are a church that would like to host this excellent Bereavement Awareness Course please contact [mark.whitehead@cff.org.uk](mailto:mark.whitehead@cff.org.uk) or telephone 029 2081 0800.

# Eco Church group inspires us to care for creation

Inspired by Eco Church Champion Gill Knight from Loughor, Karen Davies reflects on how a recently established Eco Church Group aims to help us become better stewards of God's creation.

Governments have introduced environmental Bills and Laws; television programmes have captured our imaginations; advertisements have changed our thinking on environmental issues; Local Authorities have endorsed green initiatives; schools have educated our children.

We've become familiar with Greta Thunberg, the Swedish environmental activist, who has frequently appeared on our television screens. In December, our television screens were dominated by the leaders of the various political parties, campaigning and pledging urgent action to the world-wide climate emergency. Unfortunately, we've all experienced the impact of storms Ciara, Dennis and Jorge; many of our congregation and members of our community, have been shattered by the devastating effects of flooding to their homes.

There is no doubt, that over a number of years, we've all made significant adjustments to the way we think and behave, in our endeavour to save the Planet. Despite the simple measures that we've all made as individuals, we are told that there is an even greater demand on us, to make even greater adjustments to the way we live and we have become acutely aware too, of the urgency, with which we have to make these changes. We're assured from all quarters, that there has never been a more critical time than now, for us to seek to reverse the effects of climate change!

Greta Thunberg, only 17 years of age, has made

several speeches over the past two years. One of her most powerful quotes, taken from her speech at the United Nations Climate Summit in New York, on 23rd September 2019 says, *'The eyes of all future generations are upon you. And if you choose to fail us, I say - we will never forgive you.'*

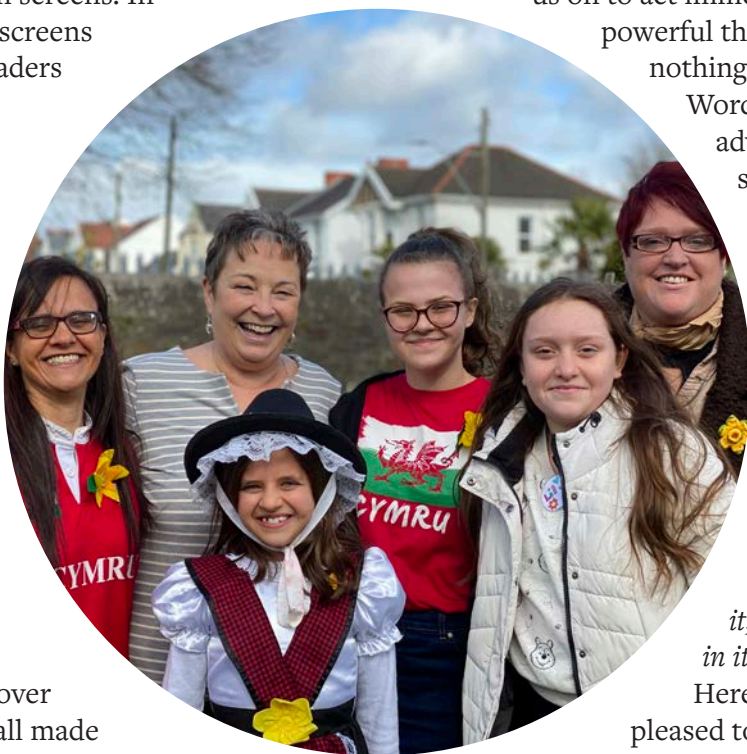
There's nothing like a powerful quote to grab our attention, to twang our heart strings and to spur us on to act immediately! But, however

powerful that might be, there's nothing more powerful than the Word of God in the Bible for: advice, encouragement, strength, instruction, warning, direction, forewarning, teaching etc.

In Genesis 2:15, it tells us that, *'God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.'* In Psalm 24:1, David writes, *'The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.'*

Here at St. Catherine's we're pleased to say that we've taken this very seriously! In February's PCC

meeting, Gill Knight, from Loughor church, gave us advice on how to become an ECO Church with A Rocha UK Project ([ecochurch.arocha.org.uk](http://ecochurch.arocha.org.uk)). Very quickly, a team was set up and St. Catherine's members met with both St. Michael's Church and St. David's Church Loughor, who incidentally, have already been awarded a Bronze Award for their efforts. It was encouraging to learn about some of the work they had done based on these five categories: Worship & Teaching, Buildings, Land, Community and Global Engagement and Lifestyle.



St. Catherine's have now completed a free online survey which was designed to equip our church and to express our care for God's world. We were blessed to receive so much advice, encouragement and practical ideas from Loughor, as we begin of our journey. They gave us information on an eco-pack which we can be obtained from Dwr Cymru; Swansea Environmental Centre will meet us to complete an Energy Survey; Environmental Centre will help us to do an Action Plan, based on our online survey; a contact who will collect crisp packets from our church and we will receive 1 pence per pack etc.

The successful meeting secured our commitment to the project and to the responsibility to protect God's Earth! We look forward to working together as the new Parish of Casllwchwr and Gorseinon and learning from Loughor as they are already way ahead of us!

To obtain the Bronze Award, there are many requirements: pray for environmental issues; sermons on caring for God's earth; sing hymns and songs celebrating God's creation; to measure our energy use and calculate the carbon footprint of our church premises; electricity supplied to the church is generated from renewable resources; water supply to our premises is metered; reducing our paper usage through double-sided copying; stocked wildlife feeding stations are present on our church land; we support a local car-share scheme which includes members sharing lifts to church; to host activities or events which encourage recycling or reuse of goods (e.g. clothes swap events). Later in the year members intend to participated in a community clean-up project.

The above statements are just a few of the requirements needed to achieve the award. There are

of course many more, but it gives us an idea of the challenges ahead and how we can demonstrate that the Gospel is good news for God's Earth.

Delighted with her new role, Lily said, 'I've joined the Eco Group because I want to help the world to be a better place.'

Hallie, our youngest member said, 'I am so excited to be a part of Eco Church. I want to help the environment and teach people in the church to help too.'

Ella's response to becoming a member of the group was, 'I'm so glad that the church has decided to start an Eco Group and I'm really looking forward to putting our plans into action. I'm excited to make our church a more eco-friendly environment.'

As a team, we want to work hard to meet the challenges we face and to work with you and guide you through this prestigious Eco Church Award at Bronze level and hopefully, in time, we will progress through to the Silver and Gold levels too.

In Genesis, God Himself says that, '*His Creation is very good.*'

The very existence of the universe is the result of God's creative activity, but over time, man has damaged it. It's critical, therefore, for man to avoid neglecting, abusing and spoiling the environment even further, when it is so precious to God.

So, as a Christian, have you ever stopped and thought about the 'impact' of your personal Carbon Footprint on God's Earth? Whether the answer is, 'yes' or 'no', we invite you to join us on this amazing journey, as we together, make this commitment to make significant changes in our daily lives as Christians, and become true and worthy custodians of God's Earth.



# Farewell to Enid, a much loved and hard working stalwart

Enid was born on 18 April 1931 in Llangennech, the only child of Florence and Will Davies. The family moved to live in 'Ashley,' Alexandra Road when her father moved to work in the steel works in Gorseinon.

She attended Gorseinon Infants school, before moving to a private school in Llanelli. After leaving school, Enid embraced a career as a nurse in the Cardiff Royal Infirmary.

She met Dennis on the Gorseinon Monkey Parade and when he discovered that she was going to St Catherine's he decided to go along to Church with a couple of his friends, because 'that's where all of the talent was'. He became friendly with Enid and when he later began an apprenticeship as a dental technician with Davies the dentist on Alexandra Road, they became closer still because her family home, 'Ashley', was next door.

Dennis later joined the Royal Army Dental Core, but he continued to write to Enid for more than two years. When he returned home from the army, the couple decided to get engaged and they later married at St Catherine's Church on 2 April 1955, just in time for a tax rebate that they used to buy a new cooker!

After getting married, they lived with Enid's parents on Alexandra Road and in the fullness of time they had two daughters, Janet and Jennifer. Later in life, when the girls had moved out, they moved to a smaller home in Brynafon Road, where Enid lived until the end of her life. Enid eventually

gave up nursing and worked for a while in Boots on the surgical counter. But the girls remember that their mother never worked when they were growing up, so when they came home from school she was always there for them. She was always in the kitchen, cooking the most memorable cakes ever.

As a family, they enjoyed many memorable holidays in the caravan in Mumbles, which gave Enid the opportunity to take the girls shopping. On a Saturday, the girls would go to Swansea by bus with Enid, but they'd always have a lift back with Dennis who was working as a dental technician in Sketty at the time.

Enid eventually became a proud and loving Nana to Sarah and Claire and a Great-grandmother to Ffion and Charlotte.

St Catherine's Church was a part of Enid's life from the very beginning. She attended the Sunday School, the Girls' Friendly Society, and in later life she served as Catering Officer, she sang in the choir, and served as a member of the Parochial Church Council. She also enjoyed helping with the Church pantomime, dressing the children and making costumes.

Enid was also heavily involved in the Friends of Gorseinon Hospital and as a member of the Gorseinon carnival committee.

Over these last few years, Enid has suffered with ill health, but Dennis has cared for her with considerable love and devotion, alongside Janet and Jenifer too. She will be sadly missed by all of her friends at St Catherine's who loved her very much.





# Tributes paid to a true gentleman

Rob Samuel reflects on the life and contribution of George Connor, a much loved and well respected member of St Catherine's who died recently.



George was born in Cape Town, South Africa in 1932 and moved to London with his family in 1954. He was educated at the Observatory Boys High School before embarking on further studies at Cape Town Technical College for two years.

George completed his National Service in 1952 as an Able Seaman in the South African Navy. Then after moving to the UK, he worked for over twenty years in London and Kent for Speedfix Tapes before being moving to 3M in Penllergaer. He later met Iris from Garden Village and a romance blossomed between them. They married on 4 September 1981, enjoying many years of joy and happiness until Iris sadly died in 2001.

I came to know George through joining St Catherine's Church over thirty years ago, and as soon as I met him I recognised that George had a strong faith and was motivated to further God's work in the church and in the wider community.

Both George and Iris worshipped together and rarely missed a Sunday service. George joined the Bible Study Group and soon helped the leader, Peppita Walters, with his in-depth research of the Bible for the groups study evenings. You could be certain with George that in-depth meant *deep*. George was an amazing researcher and exceptionally well read.

George as a member of St Catherine's Church was dedicated, encouraging and always ready to patiently

help in any way he could and he did not limit his good work to just the Church members. George was an active committee member of the Gorseinon League of Friends and helped with events and fund raising for both Gorseinon and Garngoch Hospitals. He worked closely with Emlyn Llewellyn, who was also on the committee, and Emlyn told me that George and he shared a passion for Jazz music and Films.

George was involved when we needed volunteers for the Tuesday Lunch Club, which was started to give elderly and house bound people a meal and entertainment in the Social Services building just around the corner from the Church. George was not one to do the cooking or the dishes. His gift was engaging with all of the members, listening, chatting and feeding back to the organisers anything that might need putting right.

If you ever talked to George he never rushed you or himself, you always had his complete attention. We could all learn from that in this 'busy, busy, no time to stop' society.

He was passionate about whatever he did: his faith, his work, and his community. He had a lovely sense of humour and a warm smile. He made you feel good.

The Lord has now taken George home and we have been blessed to know him. In his own words, 'a sunset in one land is a sunrise in another.'

# Celebrating the life of Gledwyn, a dear friend

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**D**aniel Gledwyn was born in Cross Hands on 14 July 1936, a son to Will and Claudia Jones and a brother to Lynn. The family later moved to Llandeilo, where Gledwyn attended the local Grammar School. After a later move to Llanelli he completed his education at Llanelli Grammar School where he played hockey for Llanelli.

Gledwyn went to Swansea University to study for a degree in social sciences and it was at Swansea that he met Megan in 1955. A romance soon blossomed between them and the couple married in April 1962 at Muncion Priory Church, Pembrokeshire. Gledwyn and Megan would eventually have two children, Robin and Maria. Gledwyn was a proud father and was well known for transporting the children to the numerous things that they did. They were heavily involved in Scouts and Guides and they also enjoyed ballroom and Latin American dancing and, with their parents, they regularly travelled the North West for competitions. Robin also enjoyed football and he would regularly go with Gledwyn to watch Wrexham and Liverpool play.

After graduating Gledwyn secured a job in Neath as a social worker. He stayed for two years before moving to work for Pembrokeshire County Council, where he was promoted to senior social worker.

In the early 1970s, Gledwyn was awarded a fellowship by the Council of Europe to study services for the Mentally Handicapped and spent a month in Norway studying their provision for the mentally handicapped. As a result of his visit, Gledwyn developed a keen interest in sport for the mentally handicapped and became involved in the work of INIS worldwide. They invited delegates from all over the world to their games (which were a forerunner to the para-Olympics) and Gledwyn attended these games in Sweden and Spain. On a number of occasions Gledwyn and Megan hosted delegates from around the world.

In 1974, the family moved to live in Mold, and Gledwyn worked as Deputy Director of Social Services for the newly formed Clwyd County Council. He made a big impact there and six years later, in 1980, Gledwyn was appointed Director of Social Services, a post which he held until he retired early in 1991.

Soon after, Gledwyn took up a new post as Director of Childline in Wales, and later moved to Swansea in 1993. In Swansea, they lived first in Uplands, then in Sketty before eventually settling in Gorseinon, beginning to worship at St Catherine's Church where Gledwyn was a much loved and respected member of the congregation.

After his retirement, Megan and Gledwyn enjoyed regular trips to the theatre and they travelled the world too, visiting the Arctic, the Antarctic, Australia, New Zealand and South America, the Falkland Islands, St Helena, the West Indies and many other remote and far flung places.

Their holidays were never organised trips because they enjoyed working things out for themselves, finding many of the best deals on the internet.

Their trips were always adventurous. They travelled to Australia four times, for example, and other memories included quad biking in Tasmania where Gledwyn was firmly advised to go behind his wife because she was a better driver! Wherever they went, Megan would enjoy swimming in the sea, but Gledwyn preferred to sit on the beach and hold the clothes. On one occasion, Megan and Gledwyn were on a safari in Africa and they had word that a lioness was prowling in the area. As they got into the jeep, Gledwyn casually said to Megan that she could sit on the outside!

He was humorous, kind and gentle in every way and he will be sadly missed.



# Janet puts her faith in action!

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Janet Rowe spoke to Sheila New about how a change of career six years ago has changed her whole outlook on life.

Deciding to leave her job in a private hospital after six years, Janet gave herself a year to find a job that was completely different and could provide her with a little more flexibility and a lot more satisfaction.

“I didn’t really have any idea about what I wanted to do,” said Janet. “I was just looking at job adverts waiting for something to take my fancy. Notices about fostering kept popping up continually, so much so, that it was almost inevitable that I at least made enquiries, and the rest is history. It was meant to be.”

“I was excited about the thought of being able to offer my home as a temporary refuge for families

in crisis and so the selection process began,” Janet explained.

Foster parents need to be able to offer children a safe and stable home so before she was able to do anything, Janet needed to undergo a whole host of careful background checks. All in all, the searches into both Janet’s financial and personal background took approximately seven months. Super enhanced DBS checks etc. had to be carried out, which are completely necessary in order to work with vulnerable young people and dysfunctional families.

After the selection process was complete, Janet worked for Barnados and for the last year has worked

for Swansea Council. During this period, she has had six short term foster children and one long term foster child. The girl she fostered long term came to her from the ages of thirteen to seventeen and she has recently moved into independent living. When this teenager came into Janet's home, she had been with twenty-three previous foster carers and was obviously difficult and defensive, but with the right amount of care and agreed boundaries, she settled in well and now that she is living independently, she still keeps in regular contact with Janet

All the children that Janet has cared for have been girls, apart from one boy who is currently still under her care. He has eight siblings and came into care on Christmas Eve. The timing in itself highlights the difficult family situations that some young people have to endure. He has settled quite well and although the placement is on a temporary basis as Janet says, "Who knows! It could well prove otherwise."

In June of last year, Janet had an emergency call from Social Services asking her to take two refugee boys from Sudan for the night. They had been found in a caravan with six other young men. They had managed to get from Sudan via Italy and then France, where they managed to stow away in the caravan belonging to a couple who were returning from holiday. The couple had no idea of their cargo until they went to start unpacking the caravan the following morning.

Janet agreed to take the boys in, and four months later they were still with her. The method of translating from Arabic to English would have proved a little tricky without the use of her mobile phone! One of the boys, even attended summer school in Swansea University in order to learn English.

"I became very familiar with all the customs that accompany Ramadan," said Janet. "I even attended the Mosque as I wanted to ensure that they were not going to be taken advantage of," she explained.

However, it was not all plain sailing as the boys kept running away. They wanted to join the other six refugees who because of their ages had been put up in a hotel. The police always found them and brought them back.

"I found the police very helpful," said Janet. "They tried to explain to the boys that running away only delayed the process of them getting independent accommodation."

They are now living independently but Janet is not kept informed of their situation.

"One of the placements that I really enjoyed and got huge satisfaction from was looking after a new born baby. The mum who was addicted to drugs had already had three children taken away from her. Social Services wanted her to try and come off the drugs and keep this child. I slept in the hospital for three nights to support mum and new born. This support continued for twelve weeks and mum was making great progress. I really believed that she had turned the corner, but unfortunately the call of her past life was too strong and she returned to her old habits."

"For a while," said Janet, "I felt guilty. I felt that somehow, I hadn't done enough."

However, the lure of drugs is stronger than any of us realise. They entangle vulnerable people in their web and they feel they have no chance of escape.

"Another young girl came to me one Tuesday," said Janet. "She was a mature seventeen-year-old who actually had a job. Things seemed positive. She said she was going into town with her friends on Saturday. I advised her to think about catching the bus back around seven thirty as I wanted her to arrive safely. We never saw her again and have no idea what happened to her."

"The fragility and instability of situations are out of my hands. I just have to try and trust that the Social workers are able to take over the reins when things destabilise."

"When dealing with my own children I think I was quite strict. Foster children have to be treated differently. They have been in the system for a long time and they rebel when faced with boundaries. The trick is in treating each child or young person as an individual. What works for one may not work for another. It's finding the right balance."

"I would definitely recommend fostering to those who have a genuine interest in making even just a little difference to a child in care or a family in crisis. The two young people currently with me seem happy and settled at the moment, but I've learned to accept the fact that this can change in a heartbeat."

"The young girl I fostered for four years who is still in my life, is evidence of the fact that caring through fostering can have a huge positive impact on that person's life. Even if it's only one good news story. It's good news indeed."

# RECOMMENDED READS

Gorseinon bookworms share something about the books that have blessed and encouraged their Christian journey

## Clare Morgan reviews

### *Fisher of Men: The Dunbridge Chronicles 1*

by Pam Rhodes

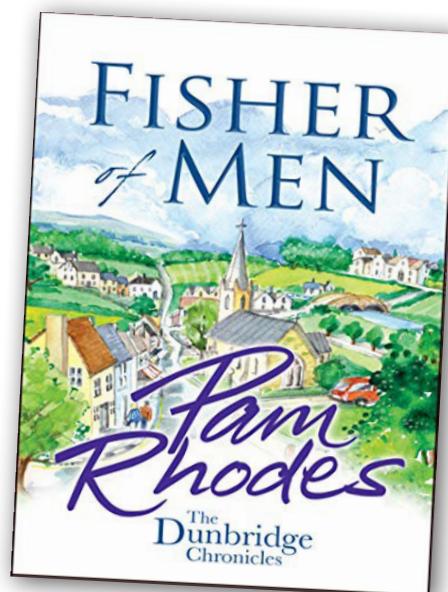
It's not often you can read a book and it feels like the author is writing about your own life (well, okay, in this case the life of my husband, Adrian). But this is what Pam Rhodes has managed to achieve in 'The Dunbridge Chronicles' series. I was in the same room as Pam once, back in 1996 in Birmingham Cathedral, singing my heart out whilst she presented the episode of 'Songs of Praise' that was being filmed there. She presented Songs of Praise well, and it turns out she writes novels well too.

As her synopsis says: *'come and meet The Revd Neil Fisher as he arrives in St Stephen's Dunbridge, a small market town, to take up his first curacy under the formidable Revd Margaret Prowse. Shy, gauche, earnest, kind and determined, he learns the ropes as he meets the many colourful characters who form the congregation. After a family tragedy rocks his boss, Neil finds himself in the deep end.'*

This is a charming mix of stories, comical and moving by turns, around a central core of familiar characters, situations and storylines. One such storyline will be the on/off romance between Neil and Claire, the spiky single mum who looks after the vicarage garden. Another will be the determination of Wendy, leader of the church music group, to bag a vicar for her husband. A third will be the apparently unbalanced partnership between Margaret Prowse and her underdog husband, Frank.

This is a book combining social comedy with spiritual resonance and depth, and Neil's adventures continue in Pam's second and third instalments, 'Casting the Net' and 'If you follow me.' Where we continue to share in the lives of Neil and the St Stephen's congregation, watch Neil grow in experience and confidence as he nurtures and guides St Stephens church forward, and discover whether he chooses Claire or Wendy to join him in his parish ministry (yes, there is a wedding to look forward to too!).

Adrian and I started dating when he was in his second year as curate in St Catherine's and I've walked along side him as he, like Neil has navigated his way and become the vicar that we know and love



today. It's a story that feels like home in some ways, and thankfully not in others!

I would definitely recommend this book if you'd like a light hearted amble, sharing the ups and downs of Anglican parish community life, and you may well find yourself reflected in one of the characters within the story.

I hope you will enjoy this, like I have.

*'Fisher of Men: The Dunbridge Chronicles 1'* by Pam Rhodes. ISBN: 978-1782640004 amazon, £7.99 paperback or from. 0.1p second hand.

#### WOULD YOU LIKE TO SUBMIT A RECOMMENDED READ REVIEW?

I'm sure that between us we have a wealth of books worth sharing. If you have a book that has helped you in your Christian faith and daily walk with God, and would like it to be considered for review in Vision magazine, get in touch with me by telephoning the Vicarage on (01792) 892849.

# Mothers' Union is much more than a chat over a cuppa!

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“The next meeting will be our AGM.” These are not words which normally gladden the hearts of members of any organisation. However, a good number turned up for our AGM on 7th January, despite the bad weather and myriad viruses doing the rounds. Always held at the beginning of January, when we return after our Christmas break, this is the ideal time to look back at the events of the previous year and to use that knowledge to plan to be as effective as we can be in the coming year. Dismissive comments are sometimes made about the Mothers' Union, likening it to a club where members meet to chat and have a cup of tea and, while we enjoy those things, our AGM is an opportunity each year to remind ourselves of the transformative work undertaken throughout the world by this vibrant Christian organisation to help women and families and, as a consequence, their communities.

We are fortunate in St Catherine's to have a strong membership and we have been delighted to welcome several new members to both our afternoon and evening (EMU) groups over the past few months. There will always be a warm welcome for anyone who wishes to attend any of our meetings and find out more about the extensive and varied work of the Mothers' Union.

At a Diocesan level, we continue to support AFIA ('Away From It All'), which has a caravan at Trecco Bay for use by families in desperate need of a break, and Gwyneth Phillips read out a thank you letter which illustrated how beneficial such a break had been for one family. The two Safe Houses in the Diocese, which provided refuge for the vulnerable from violence and domestic abuse, continue to receive support from us, with food parcels being

delivered regularly, and Faith in Families is still a major project. Faith in Families is making a real difference to the lives of some of the most needy and vulnerable children and families. Their amazing Family Centres offer a range of services from affordable childcare to lunch clubs. If you'd like to find out more, visit their website at [www.faithinfamilies.wales](http://www.faithinfamilies.wales).

Our Branch projects include our continuing support of one of our own church projects, 'Baby Basics', with members regularly bringing donations to our meetings. Baby Basics works with midwives, health visitors and other professional bodies to provide starter packs for young mums in need as they seek to look after their newborn babies.

The Moses baskets provided by St Catherine's offer a safe bed to sleep in and are packed full of toiletries such as nappies, wipes, maternity pads, as well as blankets, towels and baby clothes. For some these are the only items they have for their child. Many of our clients don't benefit from having a supportive family around them, so they appreciate the love that goes into hand-made items.

We believe that Baby Basics shows God's love in action. The aim is to help new mothers practically and generously, demonstrating the love of God through our care. God is at the centre of Baby Basics as we are inspired and motivated by His heart for everyone. Every day we continue – and every item we send out, is thanks to His kindness, grace and provision.

Clothing and other items are still being accepted for refugees—St Catherine's has been described as the, “cleanest and best ironed clothes!” Christmas

gifts of biscuits and chocolates were delivered to Cwrt Awen (on the site of the former old Post Office) for the young people residing there after leaving care, where they are given an opportunity to acquire life skills for independent living. Throughout this year we will also be collecting non-perishable goods (pasta, sauces, cup-a-soup, Pot Noodles, cereal, etc) at our meetings for their communal cupboard of “emergency” supplies. EMU members regularly donate toiletries for Cwrt Awen at their meetings and, as their Christmas project, again donated warm clothing and toiletries to Zac’s Place, which does exceptional work in supporting the homeless in Swansea.

We continue to support the Wakisa Ministries Crisis Pregnancy Centre in Kampala, Uganda which helps teenage girls with early pregnancies, many as a result of rape or incest. The girls have little or no family support. The emphasis in the Centre is to provide a temporary shelter in a Christian home for the girls, with pre and post-natal care. Bible studies and Alpha are held regularly and life skills and vocational classes give the girls an opportunity to support themselves when they leave the Centre. Arts and crafts and gardening are also popular. For many years, our branch has been supporting the Centre by producing colourful knitted squares by the bagful! The girls then choose the colours that they like and make their own baby blanket in readiness for the birth of their baby. Some squares are also used to make colourful bed blankets for the dormitories.

Ten 2Kg packages of knitted squares were sent out during 2019. The cost of postage came to £100, which was met by generous donations. Following the worrying news last year that the residential section of the Ministry had been closed down by the government, it was good to hear that its licence had been restored and it had re-opened in March.

Our Vicar, Rev Dr Adrian Morgan, ended the meeting by thanking members for the contribution they make to the life of the parish and described the Mothers’ Union as an international movement which makes such a difference to people’s lives. He went on to observe how God had used Mary, a young, vulnerable woman, to bring His Son into the world and to work his purposes out. Today we have a responsibility to care for and to support the weak, the vulnerable and the needy.

Adrian had also come to speak to us at the end of last year to tell us about the pilgrimage to the Holy Land which he and Clare had undertaken in September, accompanied by some members of St Catherine’s. We enjoyed a lovely afternoon looking at pictures of those places whose names are so familiar to us—the Sea of Galilee, Capernaum, Nazareth, Jericho and Jerusalem. Adrian’s description of these places and their place in the story of Jews and Christians was fascinating. He also spoke of his sadness in seeing the deep divisions between Israel and Palestine, the looming wall built by Israel to physically separate them, and the intimidating atmosphere in some of these areas.

Moira Bibby, our first speaker in this new year, was making a welcome return. A Mothers’ Union Trustee and member at Llansamlet, she based her talk around poems written by the late Catherine Williams, who had also been a faithful member at Llansamlet. Her first poem spoke of her initial reluctance to join the Mothers’ Union—surely it was for old people, sitting around drinking cups of tea, and she was not ready for that. However, join she did, and found fulfilment and what she described as a new family.

Another poem led Moira to speak about coping with change in our lives and of the difficulty she had experienced in adapting to retirement. She is now enjoying her voluntary work with homeless people who are participating in a project to enable them to be allocated their own flat. She was also about to start hospital visiting at Morriston as part of the chaplaincy team and displayed great enthusiasm for these new roles in her life. We shouldn’t be afraid of change as it often brings new life and exciting new opportunities!

EMU members enjoyed a thought-provoking talk by Mrs Gill Knight who came to inform us about the Eco Church project, which is a response to the challenge of climate change and our responsibility to be good stewards of God’s wonderful creation.

Mothers’ Union meetings are held in the Hall on the first and third Tuesday of each month, starting at 2.00 pm. The Evening Mothers’ Union group (EMUs) meets at 7.00 pm on the last Thursday of the month.



## Don't try and force it!

*'See the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.'* (Ecclesiastes 3.11)

Often life doesn't go according to plan. A promotion doesn't happen in time and your career plans get side-lined, or a relationship backfires and you spend every waking moment analysing what went wrong. The secret to real peace lies in seeing 'the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end', and accepting that he works according to His own timetable.

Have you ever tried unlocking the door to your house when you're rushing, weighed down with packages, and the phone is ringing? It's the right key, but it won't work because you're forcing it. Once you relax, the door opens with no problem.

One counsellor says: 'Stop trying so hard. You're sabotaging yourself. Once you decide a situation is good or bad, you put yourself in a position of having to do something about it. For example, if someone is 'good' you start comparing yourself: am I better or worse? How do I need to improve? We're exhausted before we begin! When the path is uphill—walk up the hill! When you have to go around an obstacle—go around it! Accept the path before you.'

The Bible says there's 'a proper time and procedure for every delight' (Ecclesiastes 8.6). Sometimes that means

you don't get what you *want* today, you get what you *have* today. Maybe something needs to happen first. Or there's an important lesson God wants you to learn and you're trying to avoid it. Or it's just not time.

Stop trying so hard to make things happen on *your* timetable. Do what you can do in peace, surrender the rest to God, and watch the 'impossible' fall into place.

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## TRADITION UNLOCKED

Exploring some of the traditions we take for granted in Church, what they mean and why we do them.

# Cofio Dewi Sant gyda 'Chawl a Chân'

Following the success of our recent St David's Day Celebration with 'Cawl a Chân' in the company of Parti Llwchwr, this article explores what we know of the Welsh Saint, his life and his work.

**A**r nos Lun 9 Mawrth, cawsom gyfle cofiadwy i Addathlu Dydd Gŵyl Dewi gyda Chawl a Chân yng nghwmni poblogaidd Parti Llwchwr. Ond pwy yn union odd Dewi a beth a wyddom am ei fywyd a'i waith?

Mynach Celtaidd a oedd yn byw yng Nghymru yn ystod y chweched ganrif oedd Dewi Sant. Yn ôl yr hanes Tywysog Ceredigion oedd ei dad, Sant, ac roedd ei fam, Non, yn ferch pendefig lleol ac yn ôl un chwedl, roedd hi'n nith i'r Brenin Arthur.

Cafodd ei eni ger Capel Non, sydd heb fod ymhell o Dyddewi a derbyniodd ei addysg mewn mynachdy yn Hen Fynyw gan fynach dall o'r enw Pawliniws. Arhosodd yn y mynachdy am nifer o flynyddoedd cyn iddo benderfynu mynd i deithio Cymru, a'r cyfandir, yn pregethu'r Efengyl.

Yn fynach, abad ac esgob, tyfodd Dewi yn un o aelodau mwyaf dylanwadol Eglwys Geltaidd y cyfnod, gan ledu neges Cristnogaeth ymysg llwythau paganaidd Prydain.

Sefydlodd fynachlog yn y porthladd Rhufeinig 'Menevia' yn Sir Benfro ac yn ddiweddarach daeth y lle hwn yn ddinas gadeiriol wedi ei henwi ar ôl Dewi, sef Tyddewi.

Mae'n debyg mai gwyrth gyntaf Dewi oedd adfer golwg ei athro, Pawliniws. Pan agorodd ei lygaid, y peth cyntaf a welodd oedd cennin pedr.

Un o'r straeon mwyaf adnabyddus amdano yw pan aeth i'r synod yn Llanddewi Brefi ble roedden nhw'n ceisio penderfynu os oedd o'n addas i fod yn Archesgob Cymru. Roedd tyrfa fawr wedi ymgasglu i'w glywed yn siarad ond gan fod cymaint yno, doedd llawer ohonynt nhw ddim yn ei glywed yn iawn.



Gosododd Dewi hances ar y llawr cyn sefyll arni, ac yn sydyn, cododd bryn bach o dan ei draed gan ei godi fel y gallai pawb ei weld. Mae rhai yn dweud hefyd fod colomen wen wedi glanio ar ei ysgwydd, yn arwydd gan Dduw o'i sancteiddrwydd.

Yn ôl yr hanes, roedd dros gant oed pan fu farw ar 1 Mawrth 589. Cafodd ei bregeth olaf ei chofnodi yn Llyfr Ancr Llanddewi Brefi o'r bedwaredd ganrif ar ddeg, sydd yn cynnwys ei ddyfyniad enwocaf:

*"Arghwyddi, frodyr a chwiorydd, byddwch lawen a chedwch eich ffydd a'ch cred, a gwnewch y pethau bychain a welsoch ac a glywsoch gennyf i."*

Mae llawer o'r hyn rydym yn ei wybod am Dewi

yn dod o waith Rhigyfarch ap Sulien, awdur o'r unfed ganrif ar ddef a ysgrifennodd 'Buchedd Dewi'. Gan i waith Rhigyfarch gael ei ysgrifennu dros pum can mlynedd wedi i Dewi farw, mae amheuaeth ynglŷn â pha mor ddibynadwy yw'r hanes.

Mae'n debyg i Ddewi ddod yn nawddsant i'r Cymry am fod cynifer o eglwysi hynafol Cymru wedi eu cysegru iddo, ac roedd y dyddiad yn cael ei nodi fel Dydd Gŵyl Dewi mewn llawysgrifau Gwyddelig

o'r nawfed ganrif.

Yn ddi-ddorol, ef yw'r unig nawddsant o wledydd Prydain a gafodd ei eni yn y wlad mae'n gysylltiedig â hi.

Heddiw, mae gan bobl lawer o ffyrdd gwahanol o ddathlu Dydd Gŵyl Dewi, ac yng Nghymru, bydd llawer o blant yn gwisgo gwisg Gymreig. Bydd eraill yn gwisgo cennin pedr neu genhinen, yn bwyta cawl cennin ac yn gorymdeithio.



# Wonderful Saint's Day celebrations as community comes together in thanks

St Michael's Church in Loughor marked its saint's day in style, with music, a litter-pick and the blessing of the local lifeboat.

The Gwyl Mabsant is the occasion when churches remember their saint's day, so the weekend was held around St Michael's Day, which falls at the end of September.

The Mabsant weekend started with a service of thanksgiving with a difference, organized in memory of John Charles Williams, the man who in 1929, gifted Parc Williams to the people of Loughor.

Children from Casllwchwr Primary School and Treuchaf Primary school sang and then took part in a question and answer session with Mr Rod Lewis, St Michael's Churchwarden, playing the part of J C Williams (unrecognizable in his wig and bowler

hat) and Lower Loughor Councillor, Mrs Christine Richards playing his housekeeper.

The children heard how a local man had made his fortune in America and in turn, gave back some of his wealth to the community.

Following the service, Cllr William Evans, Mayor of Llwchwr Town Council, led the children outside to place a floral tribute on the family grave, which had been professionally cleaned, free of charge for the community by Tree & Gubb, monumental stonemasons and Inkin & Deans funeral directors.

Everyone then walked the short distance from the church to Parc Williams to see the special information panel about J C Williams, followed by refreshments in the pavilion, including birthday cakes for each school to celebrate both the 90th birthday of the park and the Friends of Parc Williams 10th birthday.

Also, as part of the celebration weekend, St Michael's Church held a successful coffee morning to raise funds of Macmillan. They also held a litter pick along the foreshore as part of Keep Wales Tidy Clean Coasts and joined Loughor Boating Club for an evening of music, courtesy of Captain Cat and the Sailors. More music came from Loughor Town Band who held their annual concert at Loughor Welfare Hall.

The final event of the weekend helped to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Loughor Inshore Rescue. A large crowd gathered at the lifeboat station to support the crew members, who are all unpaid volunteers and walked with them and the lifeboat to nearby St Michael's Church.

The lifeboat procession was led by Lord Mayor Peter Black and Llŷchwyr Town Council Mayor, Cllr William Evans, who had both visited the lifeboat station and met the crew prior to the procession.

Outside the church, Reverend Dr Adrian Morgan led the prayers and blessed the lifeboat and her crew. This was followed by a thanksgiving service in the church, where the pupils of Casllwchwr and Treuchaf once again took an active part in the service to thank the Inshore Rescue Team.

Everyone agreed that it had been a wonderful community weekend hosted jointly with St Michael's and the Friends of Parc Williams.

Cllr Christine Richards said, "We had a variety of activities where local community groups and community leaders came together to celebrate the generosity of a previous Loughor resident for the gift of the park, and to thank all those in the community, especially the Inshore Rescue Team, who continue to give up their time freely for the benefit of others.



# Reaching our community

As our Vision Project progresses, we share how Christmas gave us an opportunity to hear from people across our community.

Christmas 2019 gave us an incredible opportunity to welcome thousands of worshipers and people from across our community through our doors.

Once again this year, the run up to Christmas was incredibly busy as we welcomed pupils, parents and staff from many of our local schools, including Gorseinon Primary, Pontybrenin Primary, Ysgol Gymraeg Pontybrenin, Penyrheol Primary, Penyrheol Comprehensive School and Ysgol Gyfun Gŵyr.

“These events gave us an opportunity to welcome people from across our community and to share something of the warmth and unconditional love of God through our generous hospitality, the smiles on our faces and genuine acts of kindness we showed to help make their visits special,” explained Rev Dr Adrian Morgan, our Vicar.

“It also gave us an opportunity to share something about the true meaning of Christmas with our visitors,” Adrian said.

“It was a real privilege to say something about the true meaning of Christmas as I welcomed every group that visited us.”

These visits were also opportunities to share something of how we as a Church are seeking to be useful to our community and to serve the people of Gorseinon. Over the Christmas period we asked our visitors to fill in a questionnaire telling us what they enjoy most about living in Gorseinon, what could be done to make life here even better, and what they thought we as a Church could do to help make that happen.

“We don’t want to do something for the community that they end up not really needing. That would just be a waste of everyone’s time,” Adrian said.



“What we want to do is celebrate all that is good about community life in Gorseinon already, and then work with the community to make that even better.”

“That’s why we issued questionnaires over Christmas, inviting people to return them to their schools or to special boxes in Asda, the local Post Office and Library.”

“Looking at the responses we’ve had, we’ve learned that there are lots of concerns about loneliness among the elderly, about the shortage of recreational opportunities for children and young people, and about the hidden poverty that exists in our area to name but a few things.”

Whilst asking people to fill in the questionnaires, we were also able to share about some of the projects that we as a Church undertake in partnership with others in order to help people in our community, including the Food with Friends community meal, a well established opportunity for people to get together and enjoy a wholesome meal; the Baby Basics project, which seeks to support young mothers on low incomes with the challenge of looking after a newborn; and the Holiday Hunger

project set up in partnership with Gower MP Tonia Antoniazzi, which plugged a gap created by the lack of free school meals during holiday periods.

“The really encouraging thing about this community survey was the fact that many people told us how much they appreciate what we are doing at St Catherine’s Church. They consider it their Church, even if they don’t attend regularly,” Adrian said.

Last Christmas also saw record numbers of people attending events such as Christingle, Live Nativity and Carols by Candlelight. The Civic Carol Service in the run up to Christmas was also a fitting opportunity to celebrate our partnerships with community and county councils, our MP and other community groups.

Over the next few months we will be continuing to survey local people by attending a myriad of different local groups, consulting with our Church Hall users and with members of our Church congregation, most of whom are well established local residents who understand the needs of the community. We also hope to meet with key community leaders—Headteachers, Doctors, Police and Community Support Officers, Social Workers, Local Area Coordinators, local business owners, pub landlords and others to understand the needs of our community, to share what we are already doing in our community and to identify new opportunities to develop collaborative partnerships, working with others to serve the people of Gorseinon.

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## Volunteers launch *Open the Book* in local schools

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A group of committed volunteers from Gorseinon and Loughor are working together to launch a scheme called *Open the Book*, taking familiar Bible stories into local schools.

What is it that makes a national scheme, telling Bible stories in Primary school assemblies, so popular? There are lots of answers – they are great stories; having volunteers coming in to school is fun; teachers enjoy it, pupils enjoy it; inspectors love the community contact and involvement. It’s a win-win situation.

Schools are supposed to hold Christian assemblies and integrate religion into the curriculum. A national scheme, known to be suitable in multi-cultural and multi-faith settings, is a gift. If it is offered by outside volunteers who value faith and have experience of worship, even better!

Churches jump at the opportunity for several reasons. It is a great way of getting out of our buildings into the community, and to be made welcome. It helps bridge the gap between “church,” and the way we do things there, and young people

and the world they live in. For those of grandparent age, it is a way to reach a generation whose language and lifestyle may be a bit strange.

While *Open the Book* is not bringing children to faith, it is providing the essential background understanding of scripture that every Christian needs. At the same time, it is truly educational, giving children of all backgrounds an understanding of what underlies our history, law, literature and national life.

A group of volunteers have already had two training sessions, and are now registering to go into Gorseinon Primary School. There are still opportunities to join them, if you would like to—have a word with Andrew Knight, who is co-ordinating the project, by calling him on (01792) 736159. If that is not your gift, then do remember the team in your prayers. If we can do this well, a generation will be equipped for whatever God will do with them in the future!

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## Tonia Antoniazzi MP

*Member of Parliament for Gower*



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@Tonia4Gower



@toniaantoniazzi

My Constituency office is open for caseworker drop in Sessions every Monday to Thursday, between 10am and 12pm. You don't need to book an appointment!

**Gweithio'n galed dros Gŵyr**  
*Working hard for Gower*

# Join us in our Weekly Worship

## Dydd Sul Sunday

- 9am Cymun Bendigaid yn Gymraeg.
- 10am – 11.30am Explorers: Bible stories with fun songs, interactive games, arts and crafts for children in the Church Hall.
- 10.15am A traditional Communion with lively hymns, followed by tea and coffee in the Church Hall.
- 5.30pm Evening Worship.

Worship  
with us online  
during Coronavirus!

[www.stcath.org.uk/online-worship](http://www.stcath.org.uk/online-worship)

For all of our Sunday  
services and Children's  
Ministry.

## Dydd Mercher Wednesday

- 10.30am A short mid-week Communion,  
followed by tea and coffee in the Church Hall.

*For more information on our weekly events and other activities, please visit our website [www.stcath.org.uk](http://www.stcath.org.uk) where you will find the latest details.*

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### Do you share our vision?

- I would like to meet with a member of the team.
- I would like to know more about what's going on at St Catherine's Church.
- I would like to get involved.
- I would like to subscribe to this Vision magazine.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

*Please return this slip to: St Catherine's Church, Princess Street, Gorseinon, SA4 4US.  
A member our team will soon be in touch.*