



Penrallt Baptist Church

Newsletter for December 2013

A ray of sunlight left the radiant surface of our star about 8 minutes and 20 seconds ago. *It wasn't seen by anyone.*

Five minutes ago it passed through the orbit of the planet Mercury.

No one observed it.

Three and a half minutes ago it passed through the orbit of Venus.

Not a soul noticed it.

A second ago it flashed past the International Space Station.

None of the astronauts caught so much as a glimpse of it.

Not because it was going too fast.

Nobody saw the ray of light because it is invisible.

Yes, a ray of light is invisible in a vacuum.

It isn't until it enters our atmosphere, collides with particles in the air, or a wall, or your child's face that it bounces off, scattering its energy, entering our eyes and becoming visible to you and me.

If it doesn't interact with anything, then it will disappear into infinity unobserved.

All of which makes me think about what the Gospel of John says about Jesus, Son of God:

The true light that gives light to every one was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. (John 1:9-10)

Just as light is invisible until it interacts with something, so Jesus' presence in the universe is hidden from our eyes until he changes something close to us. It might be a friend, a family member, a community, a culture. It might be something inside us that he changes: an attitude, a characteristic, an opinion, a hope, a disappointment, a feeling, a belief.

But make no mistake. Jesus changes things. He changes people. He illumines our spiritual darkness even if we don't acknowledge him.

Like a ray of light in a vacuum we can be unaware of his presence. But you met him today, when you woke up. He is with you as you read this. Jesus is the universal presence.

We celebrate him at Christmas, but he touches our soul at every moment.

What does it feel like to be touched by Jesus?

I suggest that you read the stories of Jesus in one of the four Gospels in the Bible (Matthew, Mark, Luke or John) and see what happened when he was, for a time, visible to all.

Then find somewhere quiet, maybe go down on your knees and ask him to reveal himself to you. Ask him to touch your soul and transform your life. Then set out through your day assured that he is with you. Expect changes.

Don't waste Christmas. This is a great opportunity to encounter the "true light".

God bless,

Peter

A big welcome to all students. Please collect a student pack from the door, and join in our activities, especially Faith Café on Sunday nights.

Overseas students: will you be in Bangor on Christmas Day? If so church members would love to welcome you and your friends for lunch. Tell Peter or one of the other church leaders if you will be around.

SERVICES IN DECEMBER

Dec 1

10.30am ***Brief (and unlikely) Encounter: Is there a God who will accept me?*** *Acts 8:26-40*

2.15pm Service at Bontnewydd

6.00pm Communion Service: ***Why Small is the New Big*** *Luke 1: 46-55*

Dec 8

10.30am Speaker: Mark Young

6.00pm Interactive Service: come any time: the church will be open between 5 and 7pm.

Dec 15

10.30am Sunday School Service

6.00pm Upper Bangor Community Carols by Candlelight

Dec 22

10.30am Family Service centred on the work of Tearfund

6.00pm ***Hope in the Light*** Christmas Café Church: coffee and carols in the hall.

Dec 25

10.30am Christmas Morning Service

Dec 29

10.30am Family Communion Service.

6.00pm Testimony Service: If God has done something really special for you this year, tell us.

Our Speakers in December

Peter Cousins is the minister of the church. **Mark Young** is teacher. He and Eve and their children will be leaving to teach in the Hebron International School in the Nilgiri Hills of India early in the New Year.

CHURCH LUNCH

We will host a church lunch on **Sunday December 1st**. Please bring enough buffet style "finger food" for yourselves and one or two others.

Faith Café

After church on Sunday evening 1st December we will be hosting Faith Café for students, teenagers and other young adults. Starting around 7:15 pm it is an evening of chat, interviews, music and discussions. There is a short programme at around 7:40 after which you are free to leave or stay and chat.

SPECIAL DATES IN DECEMBER

Monday 2	2.00pm	Pastoral Care Team Meeting
	7.00pm	Deacons Meeting Wednesday
Tuesday evenings:		The Alpha Course continues until the 10th.
Saturday 7		Bangor's Christmas Festival on the High Street
Monday 9	7.00pm	University Carol Service in the Cathedral
19 – 28 December		Christmas Tree event in the Cathedral
Thursday 19	6 – 7pm	Cytûn Carol Singing for Christian Aid in Morrisons.
Wednesday 1st Jan	at 1pm	New Year's Day Walk if there is interest in it.

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December 8 evening: any time between 5 and 7pm

Wander around the different prayer zones at your own speed, ending up, of course in the stable. It is interactive and multimedia. Come in your own time. It takes at least 25 minutes to walk around, but about 40 minutes to do it full justice. In the busy rush of Christmas this may be the best opportunity we can offer you to think quietly about the impact of the Incarnation of Christ on our world. Don't miss it. (Coffee and a mince pie in the hall when you are finished.) If you want to donate a box of mince pies, we will happily accept them.



December 15: Sunday School service 10.30am

Our annual Christmas service with the help of the Sunday School team and children.

✦ **December 15: Community Carols by Candlelight 6.00pm**
Once again we have invited the community groups from the Canolfan to share the evening with us. This makes for a different style of service so please do not expect the traditional format. We will have Bangor Community choir and Côr Aelwyd JMJ performing, as well as our own ensemble. It is a wonderful evening. Don't miss it.

✦ **December 22: Family Service 10.30am**
A service lasting an hour with activities, videos and carols. It will be based on the work of Tearfund

✦ **December 22: Christmas Café Church 6.00pm** *in the Canolfan (enter by the side entrance please)*
An informal service around tables with carols, activities, readings, prayers and a guest appearance of Bono (on video)

✦ **December 25: Christmas morning 10.30am**
Would all the children please bring one Christmas present to show. Peter has asked if all families could bring a Christmas card from overseas please.

✦ **December 29: Family Service 10.30am**
We will be celebrating Family Communion which will give us a good opportunity to say goodbye to Mark and Eve as they depart for India. The whole service will have a round-the-world theme as Andrew and Susie Smith will be sharing in the service also.

✦ **December 29: Testimony Service 6.00pm**
Please come prepared to contribute something of what God has done for you in 2013. Last year's stories included God's protection after being kidnapped by Bedouin bandits and a dramatic healing. It was brilliant. Expect a few miracle stories this year too.

NEWS OF PEOPLE

Our condolences to **Gill Jamison** whose father died while she was out in Peru. She flew back for the funeral. **Helen Thomas** is home and recovering after her eye treatment. **Ian Kelso** faces surgery soon.

Children's Birthdays in December:

8th: Euan Young; **14th:** Lowri Brook and Alun Hughes; **19th:** Jordan Evans; **23rd:** Finley Lemon; **29th:** Anna Walker

WEEKDAYS

Please check with the contact people when there are meetings this month.

HG = Home Group

Day	Time	Details	Contacts
Tue	8.00pm	HG, Nilgiri	Joan Beer (353874)
Tue	7.30pm	HG, Tyddyn Isaf, Menai Bridge	Magnus Forrester-Barker (717570)
Wed	10.30am	Men's Prayer Meeting	Peter Cousins (353878)
Wed	2.00pm	Carers' Home Group	Carol Morris (208407)
Wed	7.00pm	Students' Homegroup (in Peter's office)	Ben Bowden-Pickstock (07872 531601)
Wed	7.30pm	HG, The Nomads	Jess & Seamus Adams (421185) Susan Cousins (353878)
Wed	7.30pm	HG, Bethesda	Jon & Deb Stammers (602868)
Wed	6-9pm	HG, Maes Y Dref	Bryan & Ann Collis (353173)
Wed	8.00pm	HG, Grŵp Cymraeg	Owen & Nia Lloyd Evans (352634)
Thu	10.30am	Post-Alpha Bible Study	Sue & Lawrence Moss (713793)
Thu	7.30pm	HG, Llanfairpwll	Sue & Lawrence Moss (713793)
Fri	10.30am - noon	Cheeky Monkeys	Joan Rymer (713003)
Fri	10.30 – 12.30pm	HG, 6 Maes y Dref	Anne Collis (353173) anne@collis66.freeseve.co.uk
Sat	8.30am	Prayer Meeting	

NOTICEBOARD

- ***Men's Prayer Meeting*** ***Wednesday 4 December 10.30am***
The men will meet for prayer as usual on Wednesday morning. Time spent in prayer will be followed by coffee in Options. All are welcome to join us.
- ***Penrallt Walking Group***
There will not be a Penrallt Walk in December.
- ***Bangor Community Church Christmas Lunch***
Every year it is our privilege to help Bangor Community Church provide Christmas Day lunch for about 50 guests who would otherwise be on their own on that day. Please give your donations of money to Colin and Christine King, 11 Deiniol Road, Bangor. 01248 352457.

➤ ***Hospitality for International Students. From Chaplain Stephen Roe***

The International Student Support Office and Chaplaincy Team at the University are once again looking for Church members who would be willing to invite international students to their home for afternoon tea, on a Saturday or Sunday. We have lots of students who have expressed an interest, but not many hosts! The aim is to help international students feel less isolated in a strange culture, to give them a chance to get a taste of British life, and to practise their English. You would be asked to spend a couple of hours over a cup of tea or coffee and a slice of cake with two, or at most three, students, as a 'one-off' first of all, with no further commitment at this stage. It could make a big difference to students' experience of living in Wales, as well as being an opportunity for us to offer Christian hospitality to those who may feel strangers among us.

Please let me know, either by email at stephen.roe@methodist.org.uk or by phone on 01248 717084, if you feel you can offer this hospitality, or if you have any questions about it. Stephen Roe (University Chaplaincy Team)

➤ ***Positions vacant***

Churches Together in Bangor (CYTŪN) are seeking a new Secretary and a Christian Aid Coordinator. Speak to Sarah Jackson if you are interested.

➤ ***Thanks***

On behalf of the Baptist Union in Wales please pass on our thanks to the people at Penrallt for enabling us to meet together this week. We are very grateful for their kind hospitality in accommodating and feeding us so well, particularly Susan and her team of helpers.

It may seem a small thing to them but the likelihood is that we would not have met together due to expense. Nor would we have the facilities available to do so. The much-neglected gift of hospitality can afford some amazing benefits and it was clear to see that all those who attended found the 24 hours learnt new things about each other. It was truly a bridge building exercise.

➤ ***Free Safeguarding Course in Penrallt Saturday 15 February***

Following her highly successful training session six years ago, we have invited Sandra Crawford back to give another updated training session on safeguarding in the local church.

We are opening this up free to all churches. It will take place on Saturday morning, 15th February, from 9:15am until 1pm. It is for ministers, deacons, and all those who work with children and young people.

We would ask all of you to ring-fence this date in your diaries please. Sandra is a highly competent and engaging trainer who allows ample space for questions. This will be a great refresher course, as well as essential training for those who are new to work with children and young people.

➤ ***Penrallt on Facebook***

Do you know there is now a Penrallt Page? Go to Penrallt Baptist Church. If you 'like' it, then you will be updated with any events/news etc. 120 people are signed up to it. Join us.

➤ ***Homeless in Bangor***

Please do not give money directly to the homeless in Upper Bangor. We have found in the past that it has encouraged aggressive begging on the church premises by people who have a history of violence. You will find brown envelopes in the porch to put your gift in. This will buy vouchers which are distributed to the homeless by the Cathedral via St Mary's Shelter.

➤ ***The Prayer Room...***

...is open before and after the service for quiet prayer. Penrallt is a place of prayer, so make use of this sacred space.

➤ ***Pray for Penrallt Every Day***

Sign up to receive our prayer diary by e-mail every Monday morning by sending your request to: office@penrallt.org.

If you have some subject for prayer, either send it in by e-mail, or fill in one of the pink cards, which are available in the porch, and place it in the visitors' cards box or give it to Peter or Magnus.

➤ ***Pastoral Help***

If you have pastoral concerns please contact Peter or one of the other members of the Pastoral Care team.

Pat Borlace 713146; Judy Stammers 364394; Geoff Moore 410582
Helen Thomas 600174

Deadline for next month's newsletter Sunday 22 December

Please send information to Gwyneth (gwyneth@brindley-wales.com or 352682)

FOCUS ON...

Cymorth i Ferched Bangor a'r Cylch / Bangor and District Women's Aid

We provide a safe refuge for women and children fleeing domestic violence. We also support women who wish to stay safely in their own home and support children who have seen or heard abuse or violence at home. We offer free and confidential help and information including on housing and benefits, put women in touch with solicitors and other agencies, and time to talk and think situations through. We work with schools to teach teenagers about healthy relationships.

Bangor and District Women's Aid provides a fully bilingual 24 hour service to all women regardless of age, culture, language or sexual orientation. Support is offered for women suffering all types of domestic abuse, not just violence. Domestic abuse includes humiliation, forced isolation, coercion, threatening behaviour and emotional, verbal and economic abuse.

Last year we provided 26 women and 13 children with a place to live, be supported and feel safe. We also supported 28 women in our community and delivered the Freedom and Healthy Relationship programmes.

Penrallt Baptist Church is a valuable supporter of Bangor Women's Aid. Donations enable us to extend our activities, for example to purchase play equipment and renovate a playroom in our safe refuge to make it a nicer home, or school uniforms and activities for children who are relocated here.

This December we are taking part in the Bangor Cathedral Christmas Tree Festival. Our tree will be decorated with baubles made by service users with words of comfort and hope for victims of domestic violence. The Festival begins with a carol service at 5.30pm on 19 December and the trees will be in place until 28 December. Perhaps you would like to visit our tree at the Cathedral?

If you would like to find out more, including about becoming a volunteer or a trustee, please contact the Bangor Women's Aid office on 01248 679052.

Thank you for choosing to give to Bangor and District Women's Aid. Your willingness to help women and children escaping domestic violence makes all the difference to them.

24 hour helpline: 01248 679052