



Penrallt Baptist Church

Newsletter: December 2014

From the Minister:

" 's jus' my opinion" she said, dipping her hand into the bag of Doritos again, "But I 'ate Christmas."

The reindeer in the fenced-off stall stared dolefully back at her, munching methodically on a mouthful of hay.

"Can't be bothered anymore, I can't. Jus' gonna 'ide under the duvet 'til the New Year's Eve party."

Another handful of Doritos. The reindeer continued its chewing.

"Why's that?" the quiet stranger standing next to her asked.

"Eh? Oh well, you know. Too much fuss and bother."

"You don't feel you could cut down a bit? Shift your priorities, maybe?"

"Hah. I guess you 'aven't got kids have you?" She yanked at the hand of the little boy in a brown hoodie who was stretching out to grab the reindeer's ear.

"No."

"There you go, see. Got to go through it for them, 'aven't you? And if they don't get something that all their friends get, then it's sulk, sulk, sulk 'til February."

"Don't you think it's missing the point of Christmas then?"

The woman looked at the stranger.

"Point?"

"Yeah. What Christmas is all about."

"All about?"

The stranger sighed. He reached out to the little boy, displaying an empty hand. Suddenly his fist bunched up, touched the boy's ear and opened to reveal a 50p piece. The boy laughed and grabbed for the coin which mysteriously disappeared. Another chuckle and the coin reappeared to be dropped into the child's open hand. The stranger placed both hands on the wooden wattle fencing and sighed again. The reindeer stared back.

"It doesn't have to be like this."

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"What doesn't?"

"Life."

"Call this living?" she produced a hanky from her pocket and wiped her son's nose.

"But that's why he came, isn't it? To turn the daily grind into something better. Magical. Alive."

"Who? Santa?"

"No! Jesus."

"Oh him. Na. Not religious, me. No time for that nonsense."

"Why is God loving you nonsense?"

She took a few more Doritos and handed the rest to the boy who thrust his hand into the bag eagerly.

"I'm fine without it."

"But you just said you were fed up."

"Well, yeah. But that's not my fault is it?"

"I didn't say it was. I just said it could be better. Jesus came to put it right."

"Put what right?"

"The world."

"Then 'e's not making a very good job of it is 'e?" and for the first time the woman threw back her head and laughed.

"He could make it better for you."

"God love him. I wish he would."

The stranger looked steadily at her and for the first time they exchanged a gaze.

"When you meet Jesus your life changes. That's why he came."

"All that dying on the cross and stuff?"

"Part of the package. He's the real deal."

"Saviour of the world you mean?"

"More especially: your Saviour."

The woman suddenly lunged out, just in time before the little boy crammed a crisp into the reindeer's open mouth. When she turned round the stranger had gone. On the other side of the town square a brass band struck up and a choir of local church folk, wrapped up heavily against the cold, prepared themselves to sing.

"Come on," she said, pulling the boy by his collar, "let's go listen to the singing."

And across the square voices rang out.

*"Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And Heaven and nature sing."*

I hope you know God's blessing and peace this Christmas. Please get involved in Penrallt's Christmas programme and enjoy.

Peter

Services This Month:

7 December

10:30am Speaker: Peter Cousins **Cleansing Freedom** *Mark 1:40-45*
(It is possible that Roger Borlace will preach instead - see below)

6:00pm Communion Service. Speaker: Joan Beer.
The discipline of waiting *Isaiah 40:1-11, 31*

14 December

10:30am Sunday School Christmas Service.

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

6:00pm Upper Bangor Community Carols by Candlelight Service.

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, the Facer family from the music shop and Cor Aelwyd JMJ performing, as well as our own ensemble. It is a wonderful evening. Don't miss it.

21 December

10:30am Speaker: Jon Stammers.

Jon will be preaching while Ceri and team hold activities for the children in the hall.

6:00pm Christmas Café Church in the Canolfan (enter by the side entrance please).
An informal service around tables with carols, activities, readings, prayers.

25 December

10:30am Christmas Day Service led by Bob Woods.

Would all the children please bring one Christmas present to show.

28 December

10:30am Family Service led by Geoff Birch.

6:00pm Testimony Service led by Andrew March.

Please come prepared to contribute something of what God has done for you in 2014.

Our Speakers in December

All our speakers/leaders this month are members of Penrallt. **Peter Cousins**, our minister, is currently expecting to be called for surgery in Liverpool, and will be on sick leave for six weeks after his operation. **Roger Borlace** and **Geoff Birch** are retired ministers, **Jon Stammers** has a PhD from Bangor University, maintains links with the college and shares household duties with his wife, Deb. **Bob Woods** is a professor of Bangor University in the Psychology department. **Andrew March** is retired, and a deacon of Penrallt.

Serving the people of God elsewhere:

The following members of Penrallt will be preaching or leading services at other churches this month. Please remember them in your prayers.

- Sunday 7 Rob Brook leading and preaching at Trefdraeth parish church
- Sunday 14 Elaine Green preaching at Castle Square, Caernarfon;
Rob Brook leading and preaching in Llanfinnan (Talwrn) at 9am and in Gaerwen at 10am (with a mad dash between them!)
- Sunday 30 Elaine Green preaching at Holyhead English Presbyterian;
Rob and Nancy Brook helping lead a family Christmas service in Gaerwen

If you will be ministering to other congregations and would like to be included in this list in future months, please send details to Magnus in the church office.

Dates For Your Diary:

Monday 1	7:30pm	Deacons' meeting.
Wednesday 3	10:30am	Men's prayer meeting followed by coffee in Options.
Friday 5	2pm	Pastoral Care Team meeting.
Saturday 6		Bangor Christmas Festival on the High Street.
Wednesday 10		Bangor University Carol Service in the Cathedral.
Monday 15	10:30am	Church walk.
Friday 19	6-7pm	Carol Singing at Morrisons for Christian Aid.
18th -28th		Christmas Tree event in the Cathedral.

Further details of most of these events can be found in the Noticeboard section later in this newsletter.

News of People:

Congratulations to **Mim Rees** and **Ronnie Winter** on their engagement.

We are sorry that **Bernard Malone** suffered a massive stroke towards the end of November and at the time of going to press is still critically ill in Ysbyty Gwynedd.

Roshni's daughter Emma and son-in-law Thierry had a baby girl, Leah. However we offer the family our condolences on the death of Roshni's mother in India. Our condolences too for **Anne Boyer** whose father died last month.

Andrew March and **Tammy Power** underwent operations and are recovering well. **Judy Stammers** had successful heart treatment. **Kate Wheatcroft** is recovering from a broken jaw. **Lesley Jackson** had a bad fall on holiday and hurt her back. **Phil McKenna** has had another stroke and spent time in hospital. **Cathy Fooks** underwent surgery but is awaiting further referrals after the biopsy. **Mandy Shanks** is currently back in hospital for further treatment following thyroid surgery in November.

One of our previous youth workers, **Tim Phipps**, has become engaged to Alla Kostyunina in Ukraine.

Children's Birthdays in December:

Weekday Events:

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	2:00pm	HG, Carers	Carol Morris (208407)
Wed	7:30pm	HG, Bethesda	Jon & Deb Stammers (602868)
Wed	7:30pm	HG, Cymraeg	Owen & Nia Evans (352634)
Wed	7:30pm	HG, Maes y Dref (pm)	Anne Collis (353173)
Wed	7:30pm	HG, Nomads	Susan Cousins (353878)
Wed	7:00pm	HG, Students	Delvin Varghese (07528 958150)
Thu	10:30am	HG, Llanfairpwll (am)	Sue & Lawrence Moss (713793)
Thu	7:30pm	HG, Llanfairpwll (pm)	Sue & Lawrence Moss (713793)
Fri	10:30am-12pm	Cheeky Monkeys (parent & toddler group)	Joan Rymer (713003)
Fri	10:30am-12:30pm	HG, Maes y Dref (am)	Anne Collis (353173)
Sat	8:30am	Prayer Meeting	

Noticeboard:

◇ **Bangor Needs Some Volunteers**

Bangor will be celebrating on December 6th, with live reindeer, children's craft activities, rides, Winter Wonderland, choirs and bands and stalls. Come, bring your friends and enjoy the day. The Cytûn puppets will be performing at 11:30am and 2:30 pm. Cytûn would like some help handing out leaflets at these times. If you have some time, Bryan Collis (07986929847) is still looking for volunteer marshals and help clearing up at 4-6pm. Peter Cousins says: "I volunteered as a steward last year. I had a walkie-talkie, a high viz jacket and a great day out talking to people. I commend it to you."

◇ **Bible Unzipped**

Please note that Bible Unzipped is taking a break in December. The next session will be in January.

◇ **Car Parking**

The car park next door to the church is now pay and display with no special rates for the disabled. Morrisons car park only allows you to park for two hours. We recommend that you use the School of Nursing car park on Sunday mornings. Morrisons say that they switch the cameras off to make the car park available to us on Sunday and weekday evenings after 6pm. (Morrisons is happy for you to park there on Sunday mornings and do your shopping after the service provided you register your car registration number at their information desk beforehand).

◇ **Church Lunch**

We will host a church lunch after the morning service on **Sunday December 7th**. Please bring enough buffet style 'finger food' for yourselves and one or two others.

◇ **Church Walk**

Monday 15 December

10:30am

Freda is leading December's walk. Meet at 10:30am by Berea Newydd (Penrhos Road end). There should be enough room for parking. Then we'll go the long, pretty way to Susan and Peter's house, aiming to get there between 12:30 and 1 pm. The route will be past Coleg Menai and College Road, along Lower Garth Rd, Beech Rd promenade, the cycle track, round the back of Bangor, down into Caernarfon Rd, across to Aion Rd. and so to our destination. Roger Malone is compiling photos of this year's walks, to be shown over tea at Susan's. Could anyone with photos of the walks this year (or last year if not) please let Roger have them ASAP, by e-mail (roger.eve@btinternet.com) or on a disk or memory card/stick.

◇ **Ebola Crisis**

Tearfund has launched an appeal for combatting the Ebola virus crisis. Penrallt has sent a £200 donation from our contingency Missions budget on your behalf. If you would like to add to this you can do it directly online easily by going to <http://www.tearfund.org> where you will find a "donate" button ready to receive your gift.

◇ **Getting your prayer life into gear**

We believe in prayer and encourage people to pray. You can send prayer request to our electronic diary via office@penrallt.org (there are also prayer cards in the church porch that you can fill in). Better still, you can receive the prayer diary straight to your inbox every Monday by emailing the office now and requesting to be put on the list. And for more immediate sharing and response in prayer why not search on Facebook for *Penrallt Prayer Point* and send a request to join our page dedicated to prayer.

◇ **Homeless in Bangor**

The church's policy is not to give money directly to the homeless in Upper Bangor nor bring them into the church to feed them. You will find brown envelopes in the porch for a gift that will buy meal vouchers which are distributed to the homeless by the Cathedral. So far Penrallt has contributed about £6,000 to this scheme. Our community centre is occupied every day which makes it impossible to create a ministry to the homeless from our building. Lately we have been struggling with aggressive behaviour on the church premises by homeless people and we are having to try to keep the door locked more often. Please respect the church's policy. If you would like to do more to help the homeless we recommend that you contact St Mary's Hostel who are specialized in this ministry. Thank you.

◇ **Lecture in Manchester**

The Northern Baptist Learning Community is offering a public lecture: on Monday 1st December 2014 by Rev'd Dr Noel Irwin: "Becoming More Vile? Theology and Radical Incarnation." Speak to Elaine Green for more details.

◇ **Men's Prayer Meeting** *Wednesday 3 December 10:30am*

Time spent in prayer will be followed by coffee in Options.

◇ **Pastoral Help**

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

Pat Borlace 713146	Adrienne Ferrada	Geoff Moore 410582
Dave O'Brien 671848	Judy Stammers 364394	Helen Thomas 600174

◇ **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.

From the church office:

Advance Notice: Please ring fence the weekend of 23rd - 25th January 2015 as we celebrate the 10th anniversary of worshiping in our present building.

Church office closure: Please note that the office will be closed from Tuesday 23rd December and will re-open on Friday 2nd January.

Roshni writes: "Since I am rushing back to India following my mother's departure from this world, I thought it prudent to write a message to the Penrallt family. First of all, thank you all for the prayers support as I shifted between my daughter and my mother - birth and serious illness on one side; serious illness and death on the other. It has been a tough call deciding where to be. I believe the decisions I did take were God led though in many ways I probably failed both of them by stretching myself too thin. The backup I had from your prayers was evident to me throughout.

"Shifting the focus, please can I ask you to take time out to celebrate as one church family the 10th anniversary of our building. The tickets for the dance will be on sale soon, please buy them as they come out. I go on from the notion that God's vision of a family is 'all age' – young, older, the elderly – all getting together at times to be thankful and rejoice; this is such an occasion. Therefore, may I ask you all to enter the spirit of thanksgiving; we have a lot to be thankful for. Carefully consider also who you might wish to invite from those who have been with Penrallt and moved away in recent years.

"My prayers are with all of you especially those who are ill or supporting the sick ones. Through testing times God's presence becomes more evident though we might wonder where He is."

Deadline for next month's newsletter: Sunday 14 December
(NB this is a week earlier than usual due to the office closure over Christmas.)
Please send information to Magnus (office@penrallt.org; 01248 353355)
All notices should be submitted in writing (preferably by email) as early as possible.

Full Focus: Please note that the Focus article overleaf has been slightly abridged due to space constraints. If you would like a copy of the full article, together with some pictures, please contact Magnus in the church office.

Focus on...

Andrew & Susie Smith now working in Ethiopia

Andrew grew up here in Bangor. Although they live a quite nomadic life they still cross the Menai Bridge once every year or so to see Paul & Eunice (Andrew's parents).

In Ethiopia, Andrew helped to set up Desert Rose PLC, a social enterprise specialising in "Innovation" that aims to underpay its foreign staff and (conveniently helped by generous taxes) re-invest wealth back into Ethiopia. Susie helps out at an English school teaching English to a class of students that are mostly Somali.

Andrew writes on the importance of being innovative:

History's civilisations thrived – or died – on their wits, their muscle and the toss of a die somewhere. It was a messy business in which everyone used all the ingenuity they could muster to improve things for themselves, while making things as miserable as possible for everyone else. But, suddenly, for the last few centuries, some civilisations starting using some of their ingenuity to "help" others. And for some reason, we appear to be not as good at that as we were at ruining things for them.

Littered throughout our own history are innovators who, though unpopular in their time, turned out later to be really significant. Ethiopia is no different. Ethiopian and Somali innovators rarely have much honour. More often than not they are being encouraged by friends and family to "get a proper job".

I smile every time I see a yellow jerrican used for carrying water in Ethiopia. The most impactful innovation Africa may have ever seen, came about entirely by accident: "What do we do with these plastic jerricans that we bought that oil in? Let's wash them out and carry water in them! They're a lot lighter than clay ones, seem to last longer too!"

I recently found out that the patent office here registers a paltry 7 patents per year, with the vast majority being foreigners protecting their own interests in Ethiopia.

All this goes some way to explain how an Innovation Consultancy came about in Ethiopia. Even a few African innovators, working in their own context, on issues important to them, and coming up with a "Jerrican" a year, would likely transform their communities. It might be even more impacting than all that outside "help".

At Desert Rose, we spend much time innovating, creating value from our own "designed in Ethiopia" intellectual property, and bringing Ethiopians and Somalis alongside us where they quickly learn that there is value and wealth to be created from smart ideas rooted in listening to communities' challenges. We'd sooner that wealth be created and owned by Somalis and Ethiopians. One innovation in particular, a water filter that people can make locally, is now implemented by four NGOs in three countries.

We're about to embark on the biggest adventure since we started in 2008; creating a network of community-focused innovators in Somali society in the East of the country. We're likely to spend increasing time in this and our Somali language will hopefully be put to some lasting use.

It is a great privilege for us to be enabled to help people think, create, and create value. We could never do this alone. You, your friends or someone in your family might even like to join us!

Check out www.desertroseinnovation.com or www.facebook.com/desertroseconsultancy or follow us <https://twitter.com/DesertRoseAddis>