



Penrallt Baptist Church

Newsletter: December 2015

Greetings in the Lord for Advent.

'Christmas is coming and the goose is getting fat please put a penny in the old man's hat.'

Oh no not again!, more food than we can eat, more preparation than is necessary, more expense than we can afford, more presents that we don't need or want and more begging letters from charities we don't usually support. How complicated, confused, commercialised, consumeristic, calculated, calorific, cash-draining, challenging, cheerless, controversial, cranky and crazy Christmas can be. How cantankerous, contentious, conspiratorial, capricious, censorious, critical, chaotic and cold some people can be in this season of 'peace and good will towards men'? Wow! But not everyone is like that at Christmas I hear you say. You must have your grumpy 'T' shirt on again. Yes I have, so O.K. I concede.

Why oh why, though, can't we return to the simplicity of the Christmas story to find how captivating, comprehensible, catholic, charming, choral, celestial, companionable, congenial, courageous, crystallising, curative, convivial, and clear is this wonderful festival.

Jesus Christ was born, an event long-awaited by people, meticulously prepared for by God the Father and activated by the Holy Spirit and all the hosts of heaven. Hallelujah!!

Gervase Phinn the writer and Yorkshire ex-schools Inspector wrote in his book 'A Wayne in a Manger,' about a simple junior school nativity play. (This book is well worth a read.)

Clad in a brightly coloured tea towel headdress Joseph led a diffident Mary onto the stage, Mary pulling a large cardboard and polystyrene donkey. 'Come on,' urged Joseph. 'Hurry up!' He banged on the door of one of the houses, 'Open up, Open up,' he shouted loudly.

The Innkeeper, with a face like a death mask, threw open the door. 'What?' he barked.

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'Have you any room?' 'No!' 'You have,' 'I haven't!' The dialogue continued with Joseph explaining that they had travelled 'all ta night, up and down those sand dunes, through dusty towns, over hills, in and out of rivers. We're fit to drop.' Mary stared at the audience, completely motionless. Having been told firmly by the Innkeeper that he still had no room and they couldn't park the donkey there! Joseph tried a new tack. 'She's having a babby, tha knaws.' 'Well, I can't help that, it's nowt to do with me.' 'I know', replied Joseph sighing as he turned to the audience, 'and it's nowt to do with me neither.' The writer goes on to say that to the children's surprise, 'great guffaws of laughter came from the audience.'

What a good job that Christ's coming was, 'nowt to do with us.' How wonderful that God's son came as a vulnerable baby and the outcast shepherds and gentile astrologers were some of the first to know. I doubt I've had done it like that! Right from the beginning it was for sinners He came so thank God that now it is to do with us and we need to make room for the Christ child this Advent and Christmas for He is the reason for the season.

Some Christian families give each other a cow, goat or some chickens at Christmas under arrangements made by aid agencies to donate these animals to poorer third world families. (Be assured, you only receive a picture of the animal on a Christmas card.) Alternatively give a book, like the one mentioned above, and then the recipient, having read it, can pass it on to others. This year let's keep Christmas simple and emphasise the giving rather than the receiving. What do you want for Christmas!!!!

'But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.' Galatians 4 v 4.

Blessings.

Geoff

A fun exercise for Advent

Using 'dingbats' we trace the story of the coming of Jesus the Messiah through the Intertestamental period and John the Baptist. If you would like a copy to have a go, see Geoff Birch. The definitive answers will be revealed during the evening carol service on December 20th.

Services This Month:

All our speakers this month are members of Penrallt.

6 December

10:30am Speaker: Diane Holmes *New Beginnings #7: Matthew 2.*

"For I know the plans I have for you" declares the Lord

6:00pm Communion Service Speaker: James Goodman

Walking gently in a topsy-turvy world

Gifts of the Spirit #8: Galatians 6:1-10.

13 December

10:30am Sunday School Christmas Service.

6:00pm Upper Bangor Community Carols by Candlelight.

With singing led by our music ensemble, and the participation of choirs and community groups who share Canolfan Penrallt with us, we hope to make this the highlight of Upper Bangor's Christmas every year. Join us for a very special evening.

20 December

10:30am Speaker: Deb Stammers

Good news of great joy!

New Beginnings #8: Luke 2:8-20.

6:00pm Lessons and Carols for Christmas led by Geoff Birch.

Friday 25 December

10:30am Christmas morning family service led by Bob Woods.

27 December

10:30am Family Service and Communion. Speaker: Geoff Birch

Old People still have their Uses *New Beginnings #9: Luke 2:25-38.*

6:00pm Testimony Service led by Andrew March.

Has anything, happened to make you grateful to God our Father this year almost past?

Have you any miracles to report?

Can you testify to God's saving grace this year?

The last Sunday evening of the year will be an evening of testimony and witness to the Lord's goodness to us as a church and to us as individuals. Please do come ready to share what He has done for us, we will be worshiping and sharing during the evening worship. Come ready to share, rehearse what Jesus means to you and what He has done this year for you.

Dates For Your Diary:

- Wednesday 2** 10:30am Men's prayer meeting followed by coffee in Options.
7pm Prayer Ministry taster session at Penrallt.
- Saturday 5** 2pm Cytûn Carol Singing at Bangor Town Clock (part of the Bangor Festive Celebrations).
- Sunday 6** 2:15pm Carol Service at Plas Garnedd residential home in Llanberis.
- Monday 14** 10:30am Church walk at Ogwen Bank followed by tea and a slideshow at Penrallt (c. 3pm).
- Wednesday 16** 3:15pm Carol Service at Haulfre residential home in Llangoed.
- Friday 18** 6-7pm Cytûn Carol Singing at Morrisons.

Please see the Noticeboard section of this newsletter for more about most of these events.

News of People:

Condolences to the family of **Joanne Hooker** (née Webster), a former Penrallt member who died last month following a long illness. Many Penrallt members attended the funeral.

Condolences also to the family of **Rosalyn Kersey**, who are very grateful for the care we showed her over many years. Special thanks to those who helped to provide the funeral tea.

Please keep **Tony and Joan Mason** and **Phil and Eileen McKenna** in your prayers. Eileen is expected to have a hip operation in January.

Peter and Susan Cousins have now moved house. Their new address is: 22 Beckett Close, Rhos on Sea, Colwyn Bay LL28 4DX. Please hold them in your prayers as they settle into a new phase of their life.

Children's Birthdays in December:

14th: Lowri Brook 23rd: Finley Lemon 29th: Anna Walker

Mince Pies:

As usual our Christmas events, and especially the community carol service on 13th December, will be accompanied by a mountain of mince pies. If you would like to contribute some mince pies, please let Mari Kelso (421783) know as soon as possible so that we have a good idea how many to expect and please bring the pies themselves on, or just before, the day. Helpers for the kitchen are also needed so if you would like to volunteer for this, please speak to Mari.

Weekday Events:

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

HG = Home Group

Day	Time	Details	Contacts
Tue	7:30pm	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, Nomads	Pat & Roger Borlace (713146)
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)	Ceri Walker (07581 452098)
Fri	10:30am-12:30pm	HG, Maes y Dref	Anne Collis (353173)
Sat	8:30am	Prayer Meeting	

Noticeboard:

◇ **Alpha: January 2016**

We are planning an Alpha Course for next year, starting in late January and running through to early May. Publicity material such as posters, invitations, car stickers and small handouts will be available in December. However, a really good way to advertise the course is to talk about it with your family, friends, neighbours, work colleagues and anyone else not listed! **Pray for opportunities** to do just that and you'll be surprised at how God answers your prayers. **NOW** is a brilliant time to start getting alongside people and introduce them to the idea of Alpha. If you would like to chat about this, or feel that you would like to be involved in the course, either as a helper, or as a guest on the course, please contact either Lawrence Moss on 01248 713793 / lemoss@wennol22.plus.com or Roshni Verghese on 07967 320048 / vergheseroshni@hotmail.com.

Also remember that **the run up to Alpha has already started** because each week there's an opportunity to **pray specifically for Alpha via the prayer diary**. Please be encouraged to pray for Alpha wherever you are and whenever you can. **You will be doing what Jesus did** – John 17:20 records him praying "My prayer is not for them (his disciples) alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message". Please remember to pray for those involved in preparing for the course (Bryan Collis, Gwen Hicks, Pat MacKenzie, Andrew March, Lawrence Moss, Cath Owen, Brian Wheatcroft, Ellen Wilson, Roshni Verghese).

◇ **Carol Singing with Cytûn**

5th and 18th December

We will be singing carols at Bangor Town Clock from 2pm on Saturday 5th December (as part of the Festive Celebrations) and at Morrisons between 6 and 7pm on Friday 18th December. Please come and join in - let Bangor people know we exist and want to Praise God for Christmas. Musicians for both events are also needed; if you can help, please speak to Sarah Jackson (714799).

◇ **Christmas Cards**

Instead of sending Christmas cards to everyone at Penrallt, why not send one to the whole church & make a donation to BMS? There will be a board up in the hall in December to display cards to the church.

◇ **Christmas Fair**

Thanks to everyone who took part in the Christmas Fair last month, and especially to those who helped to run it. A total of around £760 was raised towards the work of Chris & Anna Hembury with Hull Youth for Christ and Duncan & Trudie Tough with Wycliffe in Papua New Guinea.

◇ **Church Lunch**

Sunday 6th December

Please bring enough buffet style food for yourselves and one or two others.

◇ **Church Walk**

Monday 14th December

10:30am

Meet in the lay-by next to the entrance to Ogwen Bank Caravan Park on the A5 just south of Bethesda, grid ref: SH627654. If the weather is fair we will do a 5 mile circular walk in Nant Ffrancon, which climbs gradually up the lower slopes of the Carneddau with superb views of the northern and eastern cwms of the Glyderau. The return route is along the new cycleway. If it's too wet, windy or cold we could limit ourselves to a walk along the bridleway next to the river. You will need to wear walking boots and bring a picnic lunch. There are no toilets on the route, but you could visit the public toilet in the middle of Bethesda on your way to the meeting point.

After the walk we'll go to Penrallt for a cup of tea and cake in the Twrgwyn room, and Roger Malone will show photographs we've taken of our walks. If you've taken some during the year, could you please let him have them, either by e-mail or on a memory stick. We expect to arrive at about 3pm, so if you can't come on the walk you'd be welcome to come to see the pictures. For more information, contact Roger & Pat Borlace (01248 713146).

◇ **Men's Prayer Meeting**

Wednesday 2nd December

10:30am

Time spent in prayer will be followed by coffee in Options. All men are welcome.

◇ **Pastoral Help**

If you have issues of concern about your own or someone else's welfare, please contact a member of the Pastoral Care team: Pat Borlace (713146); Adrienne Ferrada; Gwen Hicks; Geoff Moore (410582); Lawrence Moss (713793); Judy Stammers (364394); Helen Thomas (600174).

◇ **Pray for Penrallt Every Day**

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. For more immediate and interactive sharing of prayers, search on Facebook for *Penrallt Prayer Point* and send a request to join our group.

◇ **Prayer Ministry Taster Session** *Wednesday 2nd December 7pm*

There will be a series of teaching and practice sessions on Prayer Ministry beginning early next year. If you think God might use you in this area of ministry please come to the taster session on 2nd December at Penrallt, starting at 7pm. If you are interested but not sure do come along anyway, you will be very welcome.

◇ **Rough Sleepers**

The church's policy is not to give money directly to the rough sleepers in Upper Bangor. Be warned that some of them can be aggressive. You will find brown envelopes in the porch for a gift that will buy meal vouchers which are distributed to rough sleepers by the Cathedral.

◇ **Sunday Afternoon Services**

We visit residential homes in the area once a month on a Sunday afternoon, alternating between Haulfre (in Llangoed, on Anglesey, starting at 2:15pm) and Plas Garnedd (in Llanberis, starting at 2:45pm), usually on the first Sunday. This month we are due to visit Plas Garnedd on **Sunday 6th December** to sing carols. So that Haulfre doesn't get left out of the Christmas Celebrations, we are planning to go there for an extra visit to sing carols on **Wednesday 16th December** at 3:15pm. Please see the relevant weekly news sheets or check with the church office for confirmation that both events are happening.

From the Church Office:

Please note that the office will be closed from Wednesday 23rd December and will re-open on Monday 4th January. Because of this, the deadline for the January newsletter is slightly earlier than usual (see below) and there will be no prayer diary during the week of 27th December.

May we take this opportunity to wish you a joyful Christmas and a blessed new year.

Deadline for next month's newsletter: Tuesday 15th December.

Please sent information to Magnus (office@penrallt.org; 01248 353355).

All notices should be submitted in writing (preferably by email) as early as possible.

Focus on...

The Smiths in Ethiopia

Dear Penrallt,

I guess you may have heard some talk on the BBC about the impending hunger looming over Ethiopia. Our response is much the same as yours probably. "What can we do?" "Will our actions make much difference". This mixed with a certain amount of confusion because many places look green enough.



Last week I was in Sodo, a region in the south. I was there to start an Oxfam monitored research project into a dual process for purifying water so that families can stay healthy even if all they have is river water.

It looked like paradise and I cheerfully sent a whatsapp message and a picture to some

friends. It said ***"No drought here, thank God"***

It was only later that I realised that if you go into homes, even here, they only have a few bags of grain that will maybe last them to December. The previous rains started, farmers sowed, and then the rains which normally continue just stopped. Farmers lost their seed and growth was stunted. There will be nothing like the usual harvest just as that sack of grain finishes.

Elsewhere in Ethiopia, like back in Somali region, things are more obviously dry with both people and livestock dying. And we have barely started the dry season which will last (at least in Somali region) until March.

Some friends at our local house church recently prayed for unseasonal rain as they made a trip to Hargeisa. They arrived just as rain started which I gather was unseasonal and unusual. Some weather reports predict unseasonal rains which, I gather is a curse for farmers (with a fresh-reaped harvest still stacked in the fields) but a blessing to pastoralists (apparently pasture responds quite quickly).

Please pray for the miraculous rain at the right times and places that will minimise the tragedy here in Ethiopia. Praise God for the way in which the Ethiopian authorities seem to be planning and coordinating for the tough times ahead.

