



Penrallt Baptist Church

Newsletter: December 2016



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Because of Bethlehem... Love is born, Hope is here!

So, here we are again, that time of the year – Christmas trees, Christmas decorations, Christmas shopping, Christmas presents, Christmas cards, Christmas dinner... so it goes, on and on! Things to do, no time to do it in... have we totally lost the meaning of Christmas? Christmas – the infinite God becoming a few pounds of human flesh; God somehow becoming baby-sized – is a moment in history where God intervened to save a broken world, not for the good people with a perfect past but for those who are less than good, who have a problem past; God bringing grace, hope to humanity. 2000 years on there is still something refreshingly new for us as we remember the stable where the baby lay, the baby representing the hope of thousands of years of recorded history; Christmas, when God pulled back the curtain so mankind might see his face. God, Creator of the universe, the one who scattered the stars by hand, cared enough for us to put himself on this earth in the person of His Son as a tiny baby!

Yet have we reduced this extraordinary event to nothing but 'busyness' when there is no time to consider anything other than partying? Yes, we sing Christmas carols; we have nine lessons and carols; there is sometimes candle light to capture the birth of our Redeemer and every year we hear the same story of Mary and Joseph, the donkey, the Shepherds; is that it then? Some might think how in the midst of seeing the devastation of all human kindness in the war torn streets of Western Aleppo or the total destruction of human dignity in the muddy patch of land called Calais' 'Jungle' one could think of the 'Saviour'? Why is He not saving the world right now? But I do believe, dear reader, you know the answer. This baby came to show us the full extent of God's love for us, and, on the cross to make it possible for us once again to enter into a relationship with him. This Jesus offers us a choice. If we are to enjoy this relationship we must invite him into our lives. So we find ourselves in a place of choice – do nothing, make the wrong choice and party without meaning or receive this baby into our lives and enjoy the fullness of eternal life. Often we make the wrong choice thus breeding pain, suffering, destruction; a life without hope; a life devoid of God's grace.

This Christmas season may I invite you to reflect on the activity of God in sending His Son into this world? Hope has now come – a chance to free ourselves from all that seek to dull and destroy if we accept this free gift from heaven; a chance to be fully reconciled to the Father. If only we would trust this baby to guide us, save us and give us peace instead of placing expectations on our political masters, our economic analysts, our business brains! There is nothing wrong with looking at the great things of this world but 'seek first the kingdom of God', a God who does not let us down, a God who loves us unconditionally. The incarnation of Christ makes for a very unusual fashion statement on the world's catwalk. Clothed in humility, this baby was born in the dead of the night in a cold, dark cave reserved for animals.

Christmas means peace with God, which leads to peace with others. 'In Christ' we have a new kinship-the family of God; we have peace and joy as we are delivered from the shackles of sin and transformed to become co-heirs with Christ. So, will you, people of Penrallt, make a choice this season, to receive this free gift of salvation and service brought to us by this baby, our Saviour, whose birth we celebrate? Pause a moment amidst your busy preparations and ponder for a while what Christmas is about, in a nutshell ... God showed up... to save us!

And so, this Christmas time, I greet you, not quite as the world greets you but with nothing other than a profound love and esteem; in simplicity with a servant heart. God bless.

Roshni

Services This Month

4th December

10:30am Speaker: Christopher Penney. *Matthew 1:18–25; Luke 2:1–7*

Advent: Joseph - True servant, faithful husband

6:00pm Communion Service Speaker: Trevor Casey

Advent Prophecies: John the Baptist – Crazy Preacher

Isaiah 40:3–5; Malachi 3:1; Matthew 3:1–12

11th December

10:30am Sunday School Christmas Service

6:00pm Upper Bangor Community Carols by Candlelight service

Because of Bethlehem

With singing led by our music ensemble, and the participation of 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.

18th December

10:30am Family Communion Service. Speaker: Rob Beamish

Advent: Mary *Luke 1*

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

25th December (Christmas Day)

10:30am Christmas Morning Service. Speaker: Geoff Birch.

Christmas Unwrapped *Luke 2:1–7*

There is no evening service on Christmas Day.

Our Speakers This Month

Christopher Penney is a Baptist Minister who is currently taking a sabbatical researching for a degree with the University of Wales through Spurgeon's College London. **Trevor Casey** is the Minister of Sussex Street Christian Centre (Baptist) in Rhyl. **Rob Beamish** is the Minister of Prince's Drive Baptist Church in Colwyn Bay. **Geoff Birch** is a retired Baptist Minister and a member of Penrallt.

Dates for Your Diary

Saturdays	8:30–9:30am	Prayer meeting in the Twrgwyn Room.
Sunday 4	2:15pm	Carol service at Haulfre residential home in Llangoed (near Beaumaris).
Monday 5	7:30pm	Deacons' meeting.
Wednesday 7	10:30am	Men's prayer meeting followed by coffee.
Monday 12	2:45pm	Carol service at Plas Garnedd residential home in Llanberis.
Thursday 15	6-7pm	Cytûn carol singing at Morrisons.
Monday 18	10:30am	Church walk at Deiniolen.

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

Advance Notice: Testimony Service - Sunday evening 1st January 2017

The first 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. There will also be opportunities to request songs.

Children's Birthdays in December

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

Christmas Cards: Instead of sending everyone Christmas cards, please consider sending just one card to the entire church and giving the money saved to BMS World Mission. There will be space on the board for your cards and a place to make a donation from Sunday 11th December.

Mince Pies: As usual our Christmas events, and especially the community carol service on 11th 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.

Homegroups:

Many of our folk meet in small groups during the week for Bible study, prayer and fellowship. We encourage you to join one of these groups if you are able to.

NB not all these groups meet every week. Please check with the contact people to find out when and where they are meeting this month.

Day	Time	Group Name	Contacts
Tue	7:30pm	Nilgiri	Joan Beer (353874)
Tue	7:30pm	Tyddyn Isaf (Menai Bridge)	Magnus Forrester-Barker (717570)
Wed	2:00pm	Carers	Carol Morris (208407)
Wed	7:30pm	Bethesda	Jon & Deb Stammers (602868)
Wed	7:30pm	Nomads	Pat & Roger Borlace (713146)
Thu	10:30am	Llanfairpwll (am)	Sue & Lawrence Moss (713793)
Thu	7:30pm	Llanfairpwll (pm)	Sue & Lawrence Moss (713793)
Fri	10:30am–12:30pm	The Lydias	Freda Birchall (371316)

Noticeboard:

◇ **Bible Unzipped...**

... is taking a break in December and will return in January with an exciting new, year-long programme. More details to follow.

◇ **Church Lunch**

Please note that there is no Church Lunch this month, as it was moved forward a week for the visit of Freddy Farias-Palacios.

◇ **Church Walk**

Monday 19th December

This month's walk will be led by Andrew March (dtp4you@gmail.com), who writes: "We'll begin from 'Bus Stop' at Dinorwig (almost as far as the road goes); there is plenty of free space to park. Boots will be advantageous. Waterproofs if the weather forecast advises – do listen in! Walking through the quarry to a view point thence to Nant Peris where there is a large carpark (let's hope the weather is not too dreadful!) where we can take lunch, bring a plastic shopping bag to sit on. Then a walk along footpath and road to Llanberis then via Castell Dolbadarn thence to the Slate Museum [free entry at the moment] or the Quarry Hospital if open (if folk wish) then up through the woodland (quite steep) back to 'Bus Stop'. I know the proprietor of the hostelry at 8 High Street in Deiniolen where we might possibly partake of tea and scones! Not many miles but several changes of altitude. (Parachutes not essential!) Numbers in advance would be appreciated."

◇ **Exploring Christianity**

The Alpha Team met on 21st November to plan and pray for the next Course, which is due to commence on Monday 23rd January 2017. While more details will be given in the January Newsletter, would you now please consider prayerfully who you may invite to the course. It's not long to go to 23rd January!

◇ **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 (or occasionally on Tuesdays) 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.

◇ **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.

◇ **Scrabble Club**

Calling all SCRABBLE fanatics! Would you be interested in a Scrabble Club meeting once a week in the Twrgwyn Room over the Winter? If so, please see Roger Malone, and the poster in the hallway.

◇ **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 Haulfre on **Sunday 4th December** to sing Christmas carols. We are also intending to visit Plas Garnedd for the same purpose on **Monday 12th December** (at the usual time).

◇ **Used postage stamps for BMS**

The Baptist Missionary Society raises extra funds by selling used postage stamps (also coins, medals, old postcards and pre-1950 greetings cards). Please trim stamps leaving 3mm (1/8inch) of envelope all round. Labelled packets may be left in the Church office.

It was one of those brief encounters you never forget. You know immediately it has rearranged your priorities and disturbed your perceptions. I was sitting in a church somewhere in Israeli territory (I'll disguise the location if you don't mind) and next to me was seated the loveliest of elderly West Bank Christians. I'd spent time on the West Bank and heard first hand of the plight of our fellow-believers in that part of the Middle East. Strangled economically, with few human rights, under constant threat of having their lands confiscated and given to Jewish immigrants from anywhere in the world, they cling on. Their young generations have left in droves to seek freedom and a future overseas. They talk of returning, but everyone knows there is little to return to. And so grandparents thank God for Skype and talk across the oceans with their loved ones. If they want to get into a car and travel far they cannot. Fifteen minutes in either direction is a security wall and check point. No permit, no passage. In contrast whenever our coach had come to a checkpoint our guide would shout out in Hebrew "English!" and we'd be waved through.

And so we sat quietly next to each other talking as she opened her heart to me. And I listened. I looked into her eyes and asked "What can I do?" She smiled resignedly and said "Please pray for us. Just pray for us". I thought for a second and then remembered all those occasions in Penrallt when we had laid out prayer stations at Christmas with Bethlehem as a theme, and always, without fail, reference to the current plight of Christians in the occupied territories. We would show photos of the wall, the graffiti painted by Banksy, stencilled in brilliant protest. And we prayed: year after year during my seventeen years as pastor of Penrallt we prayed for them. So I told her that.

A look of wonder crossed her face. Her eyes widened for a second and then she said, very softly, "I didn't think you knew about us. Thank you."

Yes, my dear friend from the West Bank whom I shall never meet again in this life, we know about you. And we pray. Thank you, Penrallt, on her behalf for all your prayers in recent years.

Peter Cousins

Please note that the church office will be closed from Thursday 22nd December and will reopen on Tuesday 2nd January.

Deadline for next month's newsletter: Wednesday 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...

Guto Evans

Volunteering at Coleg y Bala

I am now in my second year in Coleg y Bala, **the Children and Youth Centre of the Presbyterian Church of Wales**. My time is spent doing youth and children's work. This involves being part of planning, setting up and running residential courses and clubs during evenings, weekends and school holidays.



The biggest events are during the summer holidays. In Anrhefn Awst (for 8-11s) we hosted 44 children for a week. We did a lot of activities such as craft, water games, cinema, and a day-trip to Anglesey Sea Zoo.

For Cwrs Ieuentid (school years 7-11) we ran an Olympic-themed course this year and God was very clearly at work during the week. We saw 5 youth give their lives to God which was absolutely amazing.

Souled Out (15+) is the biggest summer course, with 130 young people and adults and it is always special. We saw around 10 young people give their lives to God this year and there was a really strong sense of calling that Wales needs to wake up and receive Jesus, and if we didn't do it then who would?

I also travel throughout North Wales to help facilitate youth group meetings, as part of a team consisting of 2 other gap year workers and 8 Coleg staff. The team works in partnership with youth workers in the wider community. Activities include a six-a-side football team in the local league, children's clubs in various towns, youth Alpha/Bible Study and youth club. I am also mentoring 4 teens from the local youth club via weekly Bible Study and football.

I'd very much appreciate prayer for our youth in Bala. We've seen a significant surge in attendance numbers this year, and we don't want to be complacent about the work we do with our youth. We want to be purposeful and active. We want to see their lives changed through the work we do and so I ask that you pray for wisdom and persistence for the leaders, and pray for the youth's hearts to be softened to receive God's word during the sessions we run with them.

Thank you for supporting me and praying for me and the work at Coleg y Bala.

Guto is currently working as a volunteer at Coleg y Bala. If you'd like to support him financially, the bank details for Coleg y Bala are as follows:

Sort code: 20-35-47 Account number: 40228389

Please put "Guto Evans" as a reference.

If you are a tax payer, Gift Aid information is available from Owen Lloyd-Evans.