



HEART OF MONMOUTHSHIRE NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 13 CANDLEMAS '26



The View from the Vicarage

Hello friends,

I'm writing this to you from the new position my desk has in my study. It's been a mixed outcome to relocate – the sun shines directly into my eyes for part of the day and much as I love the sun, trying to read a screen in bright sunshine isn't great! The solution is to either move the desk back to where it was, or put up blinds. I'm undecided about whether to do either. The joy of the move has been that I can watch the world go by as I work. This is especially lovely twice a day as all the schoolchildren walk or skip past, often holding tight to their grown up's hand. It's lovely to see and hear.

It got me thinking about that old chestnut - are you a glass half full or a glass half empty kind of person? I've heard it said that we need both to make the world go round, is that true? It's a little like we often describe ourselves as spring or summer people, or perhaps you favour autumn or winter?

Much as we try to put ourselves and others in these little boxes as ways of trying to understand each other and find things in common, I love it that God doesn't do this. God accepts us as we are, every single one of us, unique and made in his image. I find such comfort in not having to be like anyone else, not having to fit the expectations of others, and not having to conform to a set of criteria that others might hold for me. God loves each and every one of us exactly as we are. Now that doesn't mean there isn't room for improvement! I will be the first to hold up my hands and admit to being a work in progress – ratty and unpredictable, prone to moments of jealousy and poor self-discipline, but I also know that God sees the times of generosity and joy, the energy and the patience, and they are not drowned out by the bits I need to work on. The same is true for you, whatever your foibles and your strengths, and I invite you to take comfort from that.

Philippians 1:6 says

I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. I would like to suggest that that means that we must always work to improve ourselves, to become the people God is calling us to be, and alongside that we can trust that he is doing his part to make us into his likeness, day by day, hour by hour. Isn't that simply wonderful?

So, as we approach Lent and march slowly towards Easter let our hearts and minds be on the God who loves us exactly as we are, and is shaping us and leading us, towards himself, that we may become better and better with every passing day, surrounded by his love and his plans for us to prosper. Glass half full? Definitely!

With love,

Sally

The Reverend Canon Sally Ingle-Gillis
Rector and Area Dean, Heart of Monmouthshire Ministry Area

News and Views from around the Ministry Area



St Aeddans Bettws Newydd

At Bettws Newydd we celebrated Christmas with community carol singing in the Village Hall.

Mince pies and mulled wine were provided by the Village Hall committee; A collection was taken for the Trussell Trust amounting to £160 which was forwarded to the Eastern Valley

central distribution hub which supplies all the local food banks.

We are looking forward to the next phase of our restoration, due to take place in the first two weeks of February which will see the ceiling painted, including cleaning all the woodwork; the vestry and the rest of the north transept painted, and new coping stones on the roof of the vestry.

Clare Bradly



St David's Trostrey & All Saints Kemeys Commander

The last couple of months have been very quiet at Kemeys and Trostrey. There were no Sunday services at Trostrey throughout December, but we have had several funerals



The only service held at Kemeys during December was 'Carols by Candlelight'. This little church lends itself to a special event like this. It was a beautiful service, followed by nibbles and mulled wine. We were very grateful to Lesley Evans for coming to play the organ.



As the new year starts, we turn our attention to remedial work for both churches. Investigation work has started at Kemeys and we wait to hear what the next step will entail.

Hilary Rebeiro



St Peter's Bryngwyn

Christmas for us was spent in two ways, firstly with a joint Carol Service with the members from the Catholic church in Llanarth, held this year in their lovely chapel and followed by delicious refreshments in the Big House at Llanarth Court.

This service has historically been held every other year but was paused during the pandemic and now reinstated – we held the service in Bryngwyn last year and hence the turn of the Catholic congregation to plan and host the service of readings and carols this year. It was a beautiful service, really well-planned giving Fr Will and I a challenge for next year!

Secondly our wonderful eucharist celebration on Christmas morning, despite some of our regulars not being able to be with us, we still had a great congregation who sang a cappella due, unfortunately to our sound system breaking down!

We were delighted to be able to worship in our newly decorated church and also to receive the news that the DAC had approved the removal of the pews from the north aisle in the church, this will allow some space for entertaining and for such fund-raising events as coffee mornings. All working towards our being a welcoming church.

Kay Spencer



Christchurch, Coed-paen

Christmas was indeed a special time this year as we all enjoyed the Carol Service on Christmas Eve attended by over 90 people plus about 24 children. Our Service started with Zoe singing so

enchantingly the first verse of Once in Royal Davids City.

Our young people continued to be the stars of the Service led superbly by Rev. Bill,

playing their favourite instruments from Elliot playing his cello to Rowan playing a duet with her father on their clarinets, they were amazing!!

Reuben read a lesson and Violet with the help of her younger cousin Freddie read a lovely poem.

We were so grateful to have Byrdsong with us to treat us to some lovely Christmas music they

were absolutely wonderful and we hope to welcome them to

Christchurch again soon.

Our special thanks go to Rodger Appleby for his wonderful skills on our keyboard in accompanying everyone we are always very grateful for all his generous support.

It was a truly memorable start to our Village Christmas!

It was extra special this year as we launched "The Friends of Christchurch" with an appeal throughout December which culminated with a collection at the Carol Service.

The response has been amazing as we have almost reached our first £1,000! The funds raised are designated towards helping with the maintenance of the Church building and Churchyard. The small committee of "Friends" which is mainly made up of "Non regular Church goers from our community will decide where the funds are spent. We need to make sure that Christchurch is cared for and maintained for our community and for future generations.

My sincere thanks to everyone for their amazing support especially Rev. Bill for his hard work and the great deal of time he is giving in helping to set "Friends" up.

Thank you all, wishing you all a Very Happy and Peaceful New Year.

Cilla Davies





St Peter's Goytre

A well-attended Remembrance Sunday service was held at St Peter's with around 40 local scouts in the congregation. Prior to the service in church, Revd Hannah led an act of remembrance in the village at the site of the projected new war memorial.

Goytre Wellbeing Café continues to do excellent work in providing good company and support for the neighbourhood. On November 3rd the NHS Communication and Engagement

Team visited the café to discuss issues concerning healthcare provision. More recently a Christmas lunch was enjoyed by all. This coincided with a special birthday for Sally, one of the stalwart helpers, adding to the festivities



The café meets on the first, third (and fifth) Monday of the month between 10.30 and 12 noon in Goytre Village Hall.

The annual charity Bazaar was held on November 28th. This year Father Christmas found time in his busy schedule to be in attendance, which was much appreciated!

Proceeds this year are supporting Médecins sans Frontières and the work of the Wellbeing Café, while the Grand Raffle raised funds for the church. This is very much a community event with stalls run by the Scouts and WI alongside the church.

St Peter's was decorated beautifully as always for the Christmas services and it was a pleasure to welcome a large congregation from the wider community to the Carol Service.



This was a culmination of a very active year of outreach in Goytre Fawr with a Spring quiz evening, Lenten Lunch, Bridal and Floral Display, Strawberry Tea and Open afternoon held during the year. These all had input from Llanover, Mamhilad and Monkswood churches, not only raising much needed funds for all the churches but embracing new faces. Finally, on December 10th a pre-Covid tradition was revived. As a result of discussions at the last Mission MAC meeting a ladies' lunch was held to celebrate two birthdays. Thank you, Jan, for organising this and inviting friends from across the district.

Lesley Evans



St Bartholomew's Llanover

Traditionally, Llanover marks Remembrance on Armistice Day itself, with a village ceremony held at the war memorial, also attended by children from the local nursery and representatives from Goetre School.

St Bartholomew's held a well-attended Carol Service on Christmas Eve led by Canon Stephen, in Revd Hannah's absence through illness. We are delighted that she is back to normal again. It was good to welcome many from the wider Llanover community.

Members of the church took part in the Llanover Christmas Market, selling preserves, on November 29th as part of their fundraising activities.

The renovations to Llanover Church Hall are nearing completion; it is hoped that the fulfilment of all the building requirements will mark the end of a somewhat tortuous process! Fire alarms and emergency lighting have recently been installed. The Bible Course in the autumn was held there, as are the Ladies Over 50s Keep Fit class (Mondays 10am) and monthly lunches. Watch this space for further news.



St Iltyd's Mamhilad

Remembrance Sunday was marked by a well-attended service and an act of remembrance with a local bugler.

St Iltyd's took part in both the Goetre and Llanover Christmas bazaars, selling beautiful hand knitted children's clothes.

The Christmas services comprised a Carol Service and also a Crib Service on Christmas Eve, both joyful community occasions. Following last year's successful Carols in The Star, this was repeated and was much enjoyed. Thank you to Mark for organising this and to the staff and patrons of The Star for their support of many church activities.



St Matthew's Monkswood

Although the monthly service no longer coincides with the season of remembering, it was a privilege to read out names of the faithful departed from our prayer tree during our November service, a late tribute to All Souls Day.

Last year our Carol Service was moved to the afternoon of Christmas Eve and proved successful. This was repeated, to equally good effect with several new faces in the congregation. There was some splendid singing including an impromptu descant in "Sing choirs of angels"! Sadly, Revd Hannah could not be with us, but we are most grateful to Revd Bill for stepping in at short notice. It was a

delight to welcome the newest member of St Matthew's: 1 year old Sophie who was baptised in August.





St Michael's Glascoed

A joyful midweek Carol Service was held at St Michael's which contrasted with the stormy weather outside! Local people suggested their favourite carols, which were sung with gusto, rounded off by the "Twelve Days of Christmas." The congregation was divided into odd and even "days", standing up and sitting down in turn. A chocolate-inspired retelling of the Nativity story added a fresh perspective, all rounded off with mulled wine and mince pies.

Lesley Evans

St Madoc's Llanbadoc

We were pleased to welcome friends from other churches to join our regular congregation for a joyful Christmas Morning Eucharist at which Canon Sally treated us to her 'healthy' version of the Christmas Story with Lucy

holding up the visual aids of fruit and veg – yes, we had 'peas' on earth!

At the time of writing we look forward to our Festal Evensong which hopefully some of you will have enjoyed by the time you read this.

Rosemary Evans



St Tegfedd, Llandegfedd

Happy New Year from Llandegfedd!

2026 marks the 150th anniversary of the restoration of St Tegfedd's Church in 1876, so this year we are *en fête*! Under the catchy moniker of 'Llandegfedd 150', we have a series of events planned for the year, culminating in a special service on Tegfedd's feast day, 18 December, where Archbishop Cherry will preside over a special patronal service in the church. By then, we also hope to have researched and published a

monograph on Tegfedd, about whom little is known; and that service will also hopefully witness the premiere of a specially-commissioned anthem in praise of this remarkable lady, performed by *Just Sing!* our regular visiting youth choir from Newport. This will be a really special day for our church – watch this space!

In other news, our exciting plans for the development of the church are one step closer to realisation, thanks to the agreement of neighbouring Cwrt Perrott Farm to let us have some land to the North of the churchyard to make into a carpark. We have any number of bureaucratic hurdles to get through before we welcome our first car, but we're determined to make it happen – so that's another space to watch!

Dates for your diary for 2026 include a Gamanfa Ganu on St David's Day with, visiting Welsh male voice choir; our traditional Palm Sunday procession (with visiting donkey and Jesus lookalike); and a sung Communion service (with yet another visiting choir) to the 1662 BCP rite on 3 May. All services at 11 am – and we love welcoming visitors from outside the parish

Robert Aitken





St John Apostle and Evangelist, Llandenny

Advent started when our young people met to make baubles to hang in the Lych gate, which was decorated by an Advent calendar they had made a year before.



To mark Advent, we were inspired by the charity Embrace (originally Bible Lands)

producing 24 candles to use during Advent.



We decided to say Morning Prayer every morning in church at 9am, lighting one candle each day and using the prayers provided. It was a beautiful calm time for us all and we thanked God for that time each day.

Moving on from the season of Christmas -

Candlelit Taizé service

Sunday 1 February at 5pm

Llandenny church

Brother Roger of Taizé was born in Switzerland in 1915, the 9th child of a Protestant minister. In 1940 he moved to France exploring the possibility of establishing a community of reconciliation.

In Taizé, on the edge of German occupied France he ran a safe house for those escaping the occupied territories. He was forced to leave but after the war he was joined by others and the community was established. What was unusual was that he established contacts with different denominations. and he was still committed to the task of reconciliation especially with the young.

This work continued throughout his life and as a classically trained musician, Taizé became a place of pilgrimage with the key feature of worship. He introduced the meditative, reflective chants so much associated with him.

World Day of Prayer 2026



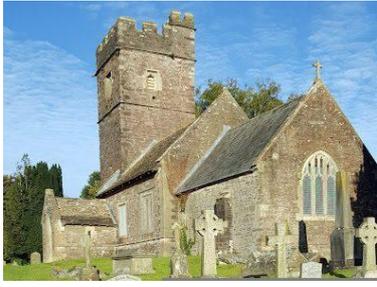
The women of Nigeria invite us to the World Day of Prayer on Friday 6 March. Come to Raglan Church at 2.30pm to join with countries throughout the whole world to pray together on the theme

' I will give you rest, come '

As the Chairman of WDP says 'when people worldwide are carrying heavy burdens, we are offered profound insights into finding Jesus. Through real life stories voiced in the service, different kinds of burdens are explored and the experiences shared help us to understand both the weight of suffering and the depth of divine rest.'

A warm welcome to join us in Raglan.

Sue Russell



St John's Llanhennock

The church year in Llanhennock ended with a bang. Our Nativity celebration was held on Friday 5th December, and was a resounding success. The church was packed, and the children and grandchildren of the village rose magnificently to the occasion, from George the welcoming innkeeper to Ffion the sympathetic donkey. We were also treated to 'Away in a

Manger' and 'Mary had a Baby', performed by the Llanhennock Ladies, who responded to the watchful control of their conductor, Ann Clarke, and produced a splendid sound.



Afterwards we all crammed into the Wheatsheaf, where it was very nearly 'no room at the inn'. Mulled wine and mince pies rounded off the evening. On Sunday 21st December we held the baptism of Charlotte Elizabeth, the granddaughter of Lin and Richard James, and this was another happy family occasion.

The baby did not cry, although she made herself known, and she was welcomed by the congregation, together with her brothers. Inevitably we ended up in the Wheatsheaf, this time for coffee and cake.

During the current cold snap, we are acutely conscious of the trials and vicissitudes of those who are struggling to feed their families and heat their homes. We are therefore having an additional collection for the Eastern Valley Food Bank over the next few weeks. It is certainly a 'Bleak Mid-Winter' for some.

Chris Edwards



St Cybi's Llangybi

The St Cybi's Christmas Carol Service, organised by Drew Morton and Anne Goldsworthy, was memorable for bringing together a children's choir as well as reviving Village Voices to raise the rafters with all our old favourites. Not only did we hear the Biblical stories of the Nativity, but also a beautiful selection of poems and other readings including a Victorian Llangybi Christmas featuring gallons of home brewed cider and the old Welsh tradition of the Mari Llwyd.

We are following conservation advice about heating the church, setting the thermostat low to protect against frost and damp, but avoiding extremes of temperature. So, remember to wrap up warm when you come to church - and sing heartily!

Peter Foden



St. Peter, Paul & John, Llantrisant & Llanllowell

Advent and Christmas this year brought an unusual intensity of joy and celebration bracketed by mourning and sorrow for our church and local community. throughout the church was filled with a wonderful array of flowers intermingled with festive decorations.

The beginning of advent saw the death of Brian Bird, one of the eldest and most respected members of our community. some years previously the bishop had agreed that Brian, a Roman Catholic, might have his funeral in Llantrisant church, conducted by the local catholic priest. the huge funeral was held exactly a week before Christmas and the family provided the church with beautiful flowers which helped to lift spirits at a time of grief.



The family then invited the church to keep all the flowers which greatly enhanced the church's Christmas decorations for the exuberant annual carol service and the joyous celebration of Christmas day itself. those well attended services ensured that the local community had the opportunity to be happy in the presence of God and whilst surrounded by beautiful evidence of his creation.

Then sadly on the eve of our first service after Christmas, our much-loved neighbour and friend Ivor Rogers died. as we prayed during intercessions next day that Ivor might rest in peace, we were once again brightened by the flowers that our old cold church had kept looking fresh whilst hinting at the joys that the spring of a new year will bring.



Sandy Blair



St Cadoc's Raglan

Even though Harvest Celebrations in Raglan were a few months ago now, the memories of a cheerful, joyful and colourful celebration are still strong in the mind. We enjoyed a delicious Harvest lunch, prepared and served by members of the congregation. Harvest gifts from our regular congregation, the primary school and Puddleducks Nursery comprised of very generous donations to the Community Pantry which was wonderful and gratefully received, we are overwhelmed by the generosity of folk.

We have hosted several coffee mornings which are always enjoyable community events and an evening with Pont Newydd Male Voice Choir.

Saturday November 8th saw a group gather to watch the enthronement of Archbishop Cherry's live-streamed from St. Wools Cathedral. Sadly, technology did not work well, but with a combination of mobile phones and other devices we were able to share in such a wonderful occasion.

The Advent season started with our Darkness into Light service and followed by the progress of Holy Family through the church to the stable and Christmas season has been celebrated with several carol services with the children from the school, a busy Christingle Service on Christmas Eve when the children re-created the Christmas scene

in the crib. Christmas Eve and Christmas mornings were celebrated with friends and visitors.

As a church we will be marking the season of Lent by hosting soup lunches on a Tuesday starting on Tuesday 24th February at 12.30pm. the proceeds of which will be donated to the Archbishop's Lent Appeal which will support social projects in our ministry areas.

At present in Raglan Church, we are studying the gospel of Mark on a Tuesday afternoon with Rev. Helen from 2.00pm - it's not too late to join in

There is also a regular coffee morning held in the Beaufort Hotel on a Tuesday morning from 10.00am when we have speakers who entertain us.

Mothers Union continue to meet at 2.30pm on a Wednesday afternoon although our spring programme is not completed yet

Open The Book continue to go into the primary school on a monthly basis and with the help of the children, act out the Bible stories.

The Handbell Ringing group will be recommencing In February following their break following a busy Christmas. They meet at 2.15pm on a Thursday afternoon, come along and join in and 'have a go'

Jenny Swatridge



St Andrew's Tredunnoch

One of the many highlights of the year at St Andrew's church, Tredunnoch, was its Chocolate Church Family carol service. The church was very well supported for this service. Rather than having a traditional carol service it was a chocolate church family service, very child friendly and lots of mentions of chocolate. It was impressive how Sally quickly gathered the children together to sing, unrehearsed, the first verse of Away in a Manger and cleverly told the Christmas story with reference to various items of chocolate, which the children waved gleefully in the air at

the appropriate moment. As this had not been rehearsed, it kept everyone on their toes and was great fun.

In late October Mr. & Mrs. Jack Heath had their wedding at St Andrew's church. The young farmers turned out in force to provide a pike guard of honour. The church looked very impressive with its floral decorations. Thanks must go to Rowena for her expertise in floral art.

The Remembrance Day Sunday service on 9th November in the church, was well supported.

A number of us went to Newport Cathedral for a service conducted by Archbishop Cherry to thank a number of church organists for their hard work. It was pleasing to see Thelma, Llantrisant's and St Andrew's church organist, receive an award presented to her by Archbishop Cherry

Fresh@4 has been thriving. It is good to discuss things and have a good natter after the service with tea and cake.

David Banning-Lover





The Priory Church of St Mary, Usk

December was an incredible month with so many activities and services in place to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ including Mince pies and coffee social bringing people together before the Christmas rush, followed by the MA quiet day in December.

The school celebrated with a performance by the Open the Book team, with a focus on the journey made by Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem and there was a visit to church for the school Carol Service



Baby and Toddlers Group enjoyed Christmas crafts, a performance from the Open the Book team and a visit from Father Christmas.



The church was decorated with a traditional green

theme and with the support of our Growing Group lit up with willow stars and candles.



At the Service of 9 Lessons and Carols the brass band, our organist David Carr and St Mary's Choir all contributed to a wonderful celebration with the church filled with nearly 200 people including those from our sister churches in Usk.

The all-age crib service on Christmas Eve is always enjoyed as children dress up and

join the nativity scene.

Midnight mass is an important part of our Christmas celebration and this year members of the congregation attended the service at Llanbadoc on Christmas Day.



December concluded a very busy year for the church and there is much to look forward to in 2026 as Team St Mary plan ahead with a series of events and services.

Team St Mary's

St Thomas à Becket, Wolvesnewton

Christmas services were well attended and the Carol Service was followed by mulled wine and delicious refreshments.

We are awaiting further estimates for repairs to the chancel ceiling and hope to have the work carried out soon so that we can resume using the main altar. Plans are afoot for some social/fundraising events so 'Watch this space'!



In the absence of much news, I offer the following from Kate McIlhagga's book, *The Green Heart of the Snowdrop*.

To know you in all things

Weave a web of your presence around me today.

Be with my hands as they work.

Be with my eyes as they see

Be with my ears as they hear.

Be with my tongue as it speaks.

Be with my feelings and my thoughts

Be with the people I meet.

Be with the things I make.

Be with the decisions I take.

Be in and through, over and under all,

that doing and hearing and seeing,

speaking and making and being,

I may glimpse your glory,

hear your voice.

and joyfully work with you

to create a new heaven and a new earth.

Scilla Greenland

More HoMMA Activities, Events and Reflections

Ministry Area Council Although at the time of writing this, the MAC had not yet met for its January meeting, I can report that the Management committee met during December and while still finding its feet as a new committee, has decided that it will be having a closer look into some of the financial and property matters. These discussions will, obviously be fed back to the Ministry Area Council for their information and ratification. More details to follow in due course. There is an awful lot going on in our Ministry Area and we must give thanks to all who do so much for all our churches – believe me, - your work is appreciated.

Kay Spencer

Lay Co-Chair



Big Saturday Breakfast took place in the Memorial Hall in Usk in November – this is surely church in the community at its best, superbly organised by Scilla, bringing the clergy and willing volunteers from across the MA together to offer hospitality and wonderful local produce to our communities - and by

the time you read this we will have served another hundred breakfasts at the next one on January 31st!

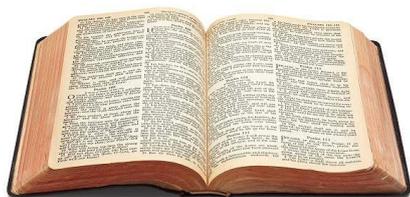




Celebrating Church Officers and Archdeacons

Visitation Service took place On December 7th when over 100 people gathered in The Priory Church of St Mary, Usk, not only to worship, but to celebrate and to rejoice in the many and varied gifts God has poured out upon the people of The Diocese of Monmouth.

Led by Archbishop Cherry this was a joyful and uplifting service, followed by refreshments and the opportunity to meet and share experiences with others from Ministry Areas from across the Diocese of Monmouth .



Bible Study , led by Rev'd Helen is now in full swing currently providing deeper understanding and the opportunity to share questions and thoughts on the Gospel of St Mark – if you are not already taking part why not give it a go ? -every Tuesday, 10 – 11.30 a.m. in St Mary's Usk or 2-3.30 in St Cadoc's Raglan.

2026
NOW@St. Mary's

A song, a bible story, and some craft, followed by baked potatoes and cake. Interactive and informal. Come and give it a try!

Suitable for small people and their grownups

Sundays 4pm
at St. Mary's Church Usk, for about an hour in total

18th Jan	21st June
15th Feb	19th July
15th March	20th Sept
19th April	18th Oct
17th May	15th Nov

Contact Rev'd Sally for more info.
01813 264429
part of the Heart of Monmouthshire Ministry Area
Registered as a CIO 1213661

All Age Worship

At 4 p.m. on the third Sunday of each month - a song bible story, craft, baked potatoes and cake – all giving joy to young people and their grownups alike - what's not to like!

The January **NOW** saw creation of trees full of love with handprints as the trunk and branches.

Open to families across the MA – do come and give it a try – contact *Canon Sally* if you want to know more.



Finally -, A big thank you to all who have contributed to this Candlemas edition of our newsletter – especially those who sent their contribution on time! Another bumper edition with contributions from all twenty churches, demonstrating just how much is going on across the Ministry Area for the Glory of God.

As Easter is early this year next edition will be published a couple of weeks after the holiday – **closing date** for copy **Friday 19th April**, where possible as an attachment in Word please

With love and a Happy New year to you all

Sarah Byford

Editor