

ARDAL WEINIDOGAETH
TÂF RHYMNI
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MINISTRY AREA

District of Gelligaer:

Churches of

St. Catwg's, Gelligaer & St. Margaret's, Gilfach



Isaiah 7:14

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.

Centre panel of stained glass window - St. Catwg's Church

Magazine - December 2023

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Greetings from the Rectory

Dear friends,

I write to you this month as we take our Advent journey toward Christmas. Throughout Advent, as we journey to Bethlehem to greet the Christ-child, we reflect on the developing relationship between God and his people revealed to us in the writings of the Old Testament. We honour the patriarchs, the first to hear and respond to the Word of God. We celebrate the prophets who spoke the Word of God to the people of Israel when they had turned their backs on the ways of God. We hear the call of John the Baptist calling us to repent our own sins and we give thanks for the Blessed Virgin Mary who answered the call of God and bore his Son into the world. At Christmas we celebrate the incarnation, the coming of Jesus, God living among us. Advent is a season of hope, hope which is fulfilled with the birth of Christ. In Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, we receive the hope of a better future that only God can give, the hope that comes from knowing that we and everyone are loved by God and that we are all important to him. Yet as we look forward to our own celebrations we are reminded that Christmas can be a difficult time for many who are bereaved or lonely and our thoughts are with all who are in need at this time. That is especially true this year when the covid pandemic has given way to a economic and cost of living crisis for many people.



As we look forward to Christmas and to celebrating the light of hope which the birth of the baby Jesus brings to us and to whole world, we look signs of hope for the future.

This year we will again hold our annual “Candle to Remember” services, our Carol Service and Christmas Services. Please see details of all our services on the Church newsletter, in our magazine or on our parish website and parish Facebook page.

Christmas is a very special time for many but also a difficult time for some. As we approach Christmas, we remember in our prayers all who are in any kind of need, the sick, the lonely and the bereaved and those without shelter or homes. There are many suffering from the cost of living

crisis who despair of what the New Year will bring. For many hope is fast disappearing. It is our prayer that they may know the peace and love of God this Christmas and that their sense of hope might be restored, that they may find strength and comfort from knowing that, in all our present difficulties, Jesus is with us all. May they know and find hope in the kindness of strangers. We give thanks for the works of a myriad of charities who work to bring hope and relief to those in need. Let us, each one, seek to bring hope in these dark days to all that we meet, let us work to restore trust between people and love for God.

Every blessing from your friend and Priest, Fr Gary.

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CHRISTMAS IN THE DISTRICT OF GELLIGAER

“A CANDLE TO REMEMBER”

A Service of Remembrance for our departed loved ones

During the service there will be an opportunity to light a candle in remembrance of loved ones and we will remember by name all at whose funerals we have officiated this year.

Identical services will be held at:

St. Catwg’s Church, Gelligaer. 3.00pm Sunday 10th December
St. Margaret’s Church, Gilfach, 6.00pm Wednesday 13th December

NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS

Our annual carol service takes place in St. Catwg’s Church, Gelligaer on Sunday 17th December at 6.00pm

CHRISTMAS HOLY EUCHARIST

Christmas Eve

CHRISTMAS EUCHARIST – St. Catwg’s - Gelligaer - 7.30pm

CHRISTMAS EUCHARIST – St. Margaret’s - Gilfach - 10.00pm

Christmas Day

S. Margaret’s Church, Gilfach: 25th December 9.00am

S. Catwg’s Church, Gelligaer: 25th December 10.15am

Reader Writes.

During this time of year, the schools are full of hustle and bustle with either individual classes or the whole school excitedly preparing and practicing for their Christmas concert or play and this year, with the families being invited to see their family members perform.



Advent is a Latin word which means ‘coming.’ For us as Christians we are preparing for the coming of Jesus into the world and to remember the true meaning of Christmas.

Whilst reading about Advent, I read words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer who describes Advent as being possible only to those who are troubled in soul, know themselves to be both poor and imperfect but who look forward to something greater to come,

Matthew Kelly, the theologian also speaks of Advent, reminding us of the words in St Mark’s Gospel to keep alert and awake as we do not know when he is coming.

This Advent, let us follow St Mark’s words and listen for God’s voice as we do not know where or when he will speak to us.

As we celebrate Christmas, may we realise how much we have to be thankful for and think of those who, for various reasons are less fortunate in not only our country but throughout the world.

Carolyn



Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

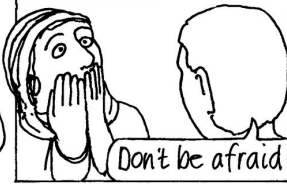
It can be read in the Bible in
Luke 1: 26-56 & Matthew 1: 18-25

In Israel, about 2000 years ago, a young woman, Mary, was going to marry Joseph. The weddings were in two stages.

In one year we will complete our wedding



Then God's messenger angel came to see Mary.



Don't be afraid!

You will have God's baby, and call him Jesus, 'god saves,' because he will save people



from what they do wrong.

How can this happen?



With God, nothing is impossible.

Your cousin Elizabeth, who couldn't have children, is now 6 months pregnant.



Mary visited Elizabeth.



When Joseph heard that Mary was pregnant, he was very upset



This will bring shame on me and my family.



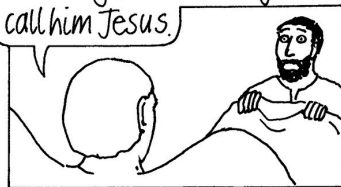
He always did what was right so he decided to end their marriage, but quietly.



But the angel came to him in a dream.



Don't be afraid to marry Mary. The baby is God's, and you will call him Jesus.



So Joseph and Mary completed their marriage.



The history of Christmas

The Bible does not give a date for the birth of Jesus. In the third century it was suggested that Jesus was conceived at the Spring equinox, 25th March, popularising the belief that He was born nine months later on 25th December. John Chrysostom, the Archbishop of Constantinople, encouraged Christians worldwide to make Christmas a holy day in about 400.

In the early Middle Ages, Christians celebrated a series of midwinter holy days. Epiphany (which recalls the visit to the infant Jesus of the wise men bearing gifts) was the climax of 12 days of Christmas, beginning on 25th December. The Emperor Charlemagne chose 25th December for his coronation in 800, and the prominence of Christmas Day rose. In England, William the Conqueror also chose 25th December for his coronation in 1066, and the date became a fixture both for religious observance and feasting.

Cooking a boar was a common feature of mediaeval Christmas feasts, and singing carols accompanied it. Writers of the time lament the fact that the true significance of Christmas was being lost because of partying. They condemn the rise of ‘misrule’ – drunken dancing and promiscuity. The day was a public holiday, and traditions of bringing evergreen foliage into the house and the exchange of gifts (usually on Epiphany) date from this time.

In the 17th century the rise of new Protestant denominations led to a rejection of many celebrations that were associated with Catholic Christianity. Christmas was one of them. After the execution of Charles I, England’s Puritan rulers made the celebration of Christmas illegal for 14 years. The restoration of Charles II ended the ban, but religious leaders continued to discourage excess, especially in Scotland. In Western Europe (but not worldwide) the day for exchanging gifts changed from Epiphany (6th January) to Christmas Day.

By the 1820s, there was a sense that the significance of Christmas was declining. Charles Dickens was one of several writers who sought to restore it. His novel *A Christmas Carol* was significant in reviving merriment during the festival. He emphasised charity and family reunions, alongside religious observance. Christmas trees, paper chains, cards and many well-known carols date from this time. So did the tradition of Boxing Day, on 26th December, when tradesmen who

had given reliable service during the year would collect ‘boxes’ of money or gifts from their customers.

In Europe Santa Claus is the figure associated with the bringing of gifts. Santa Claus is a shortening of the name of Saint Nicholas, who was a Christian bishop in the fourth century in present-day Turkey. He was particularly noted for his care for children and for his generosity to the poor. By the Middle Ages his appearance, in red bishop’s robes and a mitre, was adored in the Netherlands and familiar across Europe.

Father Christmas dates from 17th century England, where he was a secular figure of good cheer (more associated with drunkenness than gifts). The transformation of Santa Claus into today’s Father Christmas started in New York in the 1880s, where his red robes and white beard became potent advertising symbols. In some countries (such as Latin America and Eastern Europe) the tradition attempts to combine the secular and religious elements by holding that Santa Claus makes children’s presents and then gives them to the baby Jesus to distribute.

From: <https://christianity.org.uk/the-history-of-christmas/#.W9LmchNKhsM>

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Christmas and St Luke’s Gospel

It is to St Luke’s wonderful gospel that many Christians turn as the year draws to a close and Christmas approaches, for it is to St Luke that we owe the fullest account of the nativity.

Luke alone tells us the story of Mary and the angel’s visit to her, and has thus given the Church the wonderful Magnificat of Mary.

Luke alone tells us the story of Simeon’s hymn of praise, thus giving us the wonderful Nunc Dimmittis. Imagine an Anglican evensong without the Nunc Dimmittis.

Luke alone tells us the story of how the angels appeared to the shepherds and how the shepherds then visited the infant Jesus. So – imagine Christmas cards and nativity scenes every year without the shepherds arriving to visit baby Jesus. Imagine school nativity plays without our children dressed as shepherds or sheep. So – thank you, Luke!

What makes it so amazing is that Luke was not a Jew! The man who wrote the fullest nativity story, and indeed more of the New Testament than any other single person, was a Gentile!

And there were shepherds

Luke's story of the birth of Jesus is brilliantly told – the angel's visit to Mary to tell her she would be mother of the long-promised Messiah, the old priest in the Temple told by another angel that his wife would have a son to be called 'John', who would prepare the people of Israel for that event, and then Mary and Joseph making the 60 mile journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, as required by the Roman census. When they got there, no room at the inn, and they settled instead for a convenient stable, where Mary gave birth to a boy child.



Suddenly, Luke changes the tone. 'And there were shepherds ...' – that's what he actually wrote, just like that. 'And there were shepherds', doing exactly what shepherds do, looking after their flocks by night. But this night was different: yet another angelic message – a call to abandon their sheep and go into Bethlehem to see the baby Messiah. They were given directions and a 'sign' to identify Him. He would be lying in a feeding trough. Well, at least they would recognise that.

And why the shepherds, in this glorious story of our salvation? Because the event needed witnesses, and the chosen witnesses would be this bunch of scruffy, smelly shepherds straight from the sheep-pen. Nothing could speak more eloquently of God's purpose than that. This was not a Saviour for the strong, rich and powerful, but for everybody. The carpenter and his wife guarded the Saviour of the world, and the very first witnesses were not kings or priests but a handful of shepherds.

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Salvation Army – helping people out of modern slavery

The Salvation Army offered more than 10,000 people modern-slavery victim support last year, under its government contract. It was the highest since the arrangement began, and included more than 3,000 new referrals. It is now 12 years since the Government contracted the Salvation Army to provide specialist support for adult victims of modern slavery in England and Wales. The victims had experienced a range of abuse, including forced labour, sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation, and domestic servitude. The Bishop of Bristol, the Rt Revd Vivienne Faull, said that the figures were "a stark reminder of the persistent challenges we face in our own community, and a testament to the vital role played by dedicated organisations."

Messages from our Churches and Community

Samaritans Purse - Shoebox Appeal 2023



I would like to thank those members from St. Catwg's and St. Margaret's churches and the wider community who participated in the shoebox appeal, this year 69 boxes were completed.

Thanks also to Father Gary for the evensong service in which he blessed the shoeboxes before they were taken to the collection point in Bedwas.

Thanks to Jeanette for her help and Marilyn and Pauline for their help in transporting the boxes to Bedwas.

I am also grateful to those members in St. Margarets who completed a box on the Samaritan Purse website.

Joan

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Alleluia! Going to church raises the spirits

Attending church regularly makes you happier and more optimistic about the future, a new report has suggested. More than eight in ten people who go to a place of worship at least once a week reported being happy, compared to just half of those who never attend a religious service.

Church-goers also reported higher levels of self-control, better psychological well-being and more satisfaction with their lives than others. The research, conducted by the Institute for the Impact of Faith in Life (IIFL), also suggested that the frequency of religious services attendance improved mental health outcomes. More than 2,000 adults across the UK were surveyed on whether or not they identified as religious, as well as various aspects of their mental health.

Over 70 per cent of those who said that their religious background was important to their identity reported having "good psychological well-being" in the three months before the survey compared to less than half of atheists. Among those with a strong attachment to a god

or higher being, more than three quarters said they were confident in handling life's challenges. For those who did not believe in the existence of a spiritual being, the figure dropped to 57 per cent.

Dr Rakib Ehsan, of IIFL and author of the report said, "While it may be considered unfashionable and outdated, the sense of belonging and purpose that can be provided through religious and spiritual forms of attachment and membership should be better explored by policy makers and practitioners in the sphere of mental health."

By **Genevieve Holl-Allen**

Submitted by **Audrey Phillips**

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Join us for our service of:

Nine Lessons and Carols

Our annual carol service takes place on,

Sunday 17th December at 6.00pm

St. Catwg's Church, Gelligaer.

(Donation will be given to Ty Hafan).



God in the Arts

Michael Burgess continues his look at great works of Christian art. You can see the image described by googling 'Still Life with Lemons, Oranges and a Rose' by Francisco Zurbarán.

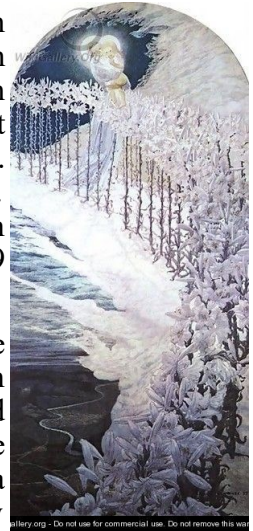
'The Virgin of the Lilies' by Carlos Schwabe

During this year we have been exploring how art can celebrate the wonder of this world. This month with our Lady and Jesus we stand above the world: high on the clouds with a glorious path of tall, elegant lilies that lead like a stairway to the earth beneath. This is 'The Virgin of the Lilies' by Carlos Schwabe. He was born in Germany and then lived in Switzerland and France, painting this canvas in 1899 when he was 33 years old.

It is like a scene caught when we look out of the window in an aeroplane. We can see the earth beneath and spot hills and valleys, roads and settlements, and a river weaving its way through the countryside. Mary and Jesus are haloed in a lunar-like radiance. The lilies are symbols of purity and obedience, the qualities that will take them to that scene at Bethlehem which we give thanks for at Christmas. The heavenly light shining out in the painting brings hope and joy to the world below, transforming lives with the wonder of the Saviour's birth.

Jesus holds three nails in his hand as a sign that His life will be tempered by rejection, suffering and death. But the lilies growing tall and straight in the skies are signs of new life and resurrection. The light come down to earth at Christmas can never be extinguished. That light and love are expressed in this vivid, moving painting of Carlos Schwabe as they are caught up in the carol of Christina Rossetti we sing at this time:

*Love shall be our token, Love be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and all men, Love for plea and gift and sign.*



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God in the Sciences

This series is written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge. Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

Follow the Star

Jesus' welcoming committee included Eastern scholars who learned about His birth through their study of astrology. I can't help thinking that the arrival of these people at Bethlehem is a link between a very early form of science (albeit mixed in with their own form of religion) and Christian faith. What better way to discover God than to explore the world and follow the evidence wherever it leads? But what exactly was the star of Bethlehem? Scientists have investigated this question over the centuries, coming up with a variety of answers.

First, there is the idea of a supernova: the massively bright explosion caused by a dying star. On rare occasions a supernova can be seen from Earth with the naked eye, remaining visible for several months. We now know that Herod the Great died around 4BC, so the actual date of Jesus' birth must be a little earlier. The supernovae that might match this timing were one in the Andromeda galaxy between March 8BC and September 7BC, and another in the constellation of Capricorn in the Spring of 5BC.

Next, comes a planetary conjunction. The alignment most commonly associated with the star of Bethlehem was between Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation of Pisces in 7BC, but not everyone is sure whether this would be extraordinary enough to be the 'star' mentioned in the Bible.

Finally, the bright astronomical object that drew the Magi could have been a comet. This idea came from Sir Colin Humphreys, Professor of Materials Science at Cambridge University, and Oxford astronomer WG Waddington, who found that a comet was recorded by Chinese astronomers between March and May, 5BC. Humphreys then speculated that the 'no room at the inn' scenario came about because Jesus was born during Passover, and the Magi visited Jesus in May or June.

People interpret the biblical account of Jesus' birth in all sorts of ways, but there's very little argument from serious historians that Jesus of Nazareth actually existed. Whatever the true explanation for the 'star

of Bethlehem' may be, there's plenty of evidence that an astronomical event could have happened at the time of His birth.

I think it makes perfect sense that if God was going to enter His own creation and take on the form of one of His own creatures, it should be marked by a very significant physical event!

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Christmas Eve

How do you celebrate Christmas Eve? It has its own customs, the most popular of which is going to Midnight Mass, or the Christ-Mas. This is the only Mass of the year that is allowed to start after sunset. In Catholic countries such as Spain, Italy and Poland, Midnight Mass is in fact the most important church service of the entire Christmas season, and many people traditionally fast beforehand. In other countries, such as Belgium and Denmark, people dine during the evening, and then go on to the Midnight Service.

The British are behind some countries when it comes to exchanging presents: in Germany, Sweden and Portugal the custom is to exchange on Christmas Eve. But the British are ahead of Serbia and Slovakia, where the Christmas tree is not even brought into the house and decorated until Christmas Eve.

Yule logs are not so popular since the decline of the fireplace, but traditionally it was lit on Christmas Eve from a bit of the previous year's log, and then would be burned non-stop until 12th Night (6th January). Tradition also decreed that any greenery such as holly, ivy or mistletoe must wait until Christmas Eve until being brought into the house.





Mothers' Union



There is not much to report this month as it has all been reported previously. We continued with our coffee mornings and quiz afternoons. They have been quieter than normal but that could be due to the inclement weather. Our monthly meeting on the first Tuesday of November was with one of our members, Sheila, giving a demonstration on her arts and crafts skills. I was unable to attend so June conducted the prayers and notices and I have been told that it was a great meeting. Sheila is so talented in her craft and so clever in her ideas and skills. As I am so poor at anything artistic I am sorry that I missed it. She would have had her work cut out to try and teach me to do anything. Everyone who attended said that it was a lovely evening and a big thank you to Sheila for doing it. It shows that every one of us has a talent to bring to church and we are able to help others in some form or other.

Rhian and I were in London on that date attending the State Opening of Parliament. It was an opportunity not to be missed. Rhian was the guest of Lord Touhig, who used to be the member of Parliament for Islwyn and is now in the House of Lords. He was able to get a ticket for me to go with Rhian, as the guest of the Speaker of the House of Lords. John McFall, the Speaker, is a good friend of Don Touhig and we met him for dinner the night before the State Opening and he was very good company along with his son-in-law and grandson. I had a magnificent seat in the Gallery right opposite the stairs. I was underneath the television cameras, hence no one saw me on the T.V. though I know lots of you were looking for me. It was such an exciting event as it was the first speech by King Charles III. The pomp and ceremony was magnificent and everyone was very friendly. So although I was unable to hear Sheila's contribution I really couldn't turn down an opportunity like that, which is unlikely to ever happen again.

December will see us continuing our events with our meeting being a chance to sing carols, drink wine and eat mince pies. Our afternoon lunch and cabaret is on the 11th in Bryn Meadows and if anyone who has not given me their names but would like to go I will try to book for you. We also have another date of 19th December for the dance class in Maes Manor, but anyone is welcome as long as they let me know as soon as possible. The cost for both of these dates is £29.95 each, plus bus fare. Our coffee morning on the 12th will be a mince pies

morning, but there will be no quiz afternoon in December as it would fall on Boxing Day. Then we will be in a new year and our Annual General Meeting, again.

Please keep our Indoor members in your prayers, Olive and Marion and also Gaynor. Also remember Nesta and David as they mourn the loss of their daughter-in-law, Steph at a young age. We send our love and thoughts to their son Gareth and their families.

So I wish you all a very Happy and Peaceful Christmas and look forward to seeing you all next year with thanks for being such a support this last year.

God Bless

Kath x

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Christmas all wrapped up!

“And this will be a sign to you, you will find the babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” Luke 2:2

Do you ever dread wrapping all those Christmas presents? The large roll of fragile paper that slides around on the table, the lumpy gifts that defy wrapping, the tape that sticks to your fingers... what is so important about wrapping presents, anyway? Why not just hand them over?

Well did you ever consider that the very first Christmas present EVER was wrapped up – in swaddling clothes? In biblical times, after a birth, the umbilical cord would be cut, the baby would be washed, rubbed with salt and oil, and then carefully wrapped in swaddling clothes. The swaddling is described as a cloth or blanket, tied together like bandages. This process was carried out with great love and care and was thought to have health-giving benefits.

On the other hand, to ignore the swaddling process was seen as abandonment and rejection. “And as for thy nativity, on the day thou wast born, thy navel was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to soothe thee. Thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all. (Ezekiel 16:4 KJ21)

So why wrap your presents? Because just as the baby Jesus was swaddled as a sign of great love and care, wrapping our gifts is a sign of our own effort, love, and care towards those whom we love. So be patient with the wrapping paper, and Happy Christmas!

Where did Christmas stockings come from?

No one is really sure, but a story is told of St Nicholas, a bishop who lived in the 4th century, who may have started the custom by accident. St Nicholas was of a wealthy family, and of a generous heart. As Christmas approached one year, he wanted to help a poor family whom he knew, but he did not want them to know it was him. So he climbed up on their roof on Christmas Eve and dropped some coins down the chimney.

The next morning the coins, to the great surprise of the family, were found in the stockings of the ladies, who had hung them to dry by the fire the night before. Every year after that they put their stockings out, in the hope that some more money would fall into them. They told the story of this amazing appearance to their friends and neighbours, and the custom caught on.

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St Nicholas – another look at this much-loved saint



One account of how Father Christmas began tells of a man named Nicholas who was born in the third century in the Greek village of Patara, on what is today the southern coast of Turkey. His family were both devout and wealthy, and when his parents died in an epidemic, Nicholas decided to use his inheritance to help people. He gave to the needy, the sick, the suffering. He dedicated his whole life to God's service, and was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man. As a bishop in later life, he joined other bishops and priests in prison under the emperor Diocletian's fierce persecution of Christians across the Roman Empire.

Finally released, Nicholas was all the more determined to shed abroad the news of God's love. He did so by giving. One story of his

generosity explains why we hang Christmas stockings over our mantelpieces today. There was a poor family with three daughters who needed dowries if they were to marry, and not be sold into slavery. Nicholas heard of their plight, and tossed three bags of gold into their home through an open window – thus saving the girls from a life of misery.

The bags of gold landed in stockings or shoes left before the fire to dry. Hence the custom of children hanging out stockings – in the hope of attracting presents of their own from St Nicholas – on Christmas Eve. That is why three gold balls, sometimes represented as oranges, are one of the symbols of St Nicholas.

The example of St Nicholas has never been forgotten – in bygone years boys in Germany and Poland would dress up as bishops on 6th December, and beg alms for the poor. In the Netherlands and Belgium ‘St Nicholas’ would arrive on a steamship from Spain to ride a white horse on his gift-giving rounds. To this day, 6th December is still the main day for gift-giving and merry-making in much of Europe. Many feel that simple gift-giving in early Advent helps preserve a Christmas Day focus on the Christ Child.

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On the Feast of Stephen

Everyone knows that it was on the feast of Stephen that ‘good king Wenceslas looked on’. After all, it’s in a Christmas carol – but why? There’s nothing about Christmas in it: a splendid young page who rustled up some flesh, wine and logs, an old man out in the snow (‘deep and crisp and even’) and a kindly monarch. But Christmas?

The clue is in ‘the feast of Stephen’, which falls on 26th December, or ‘Boxing Day’, as we know it. That, too, has nothing to do with Christmas, beyond the fact that in the past people put a contribution in tradesmen’s boxes as a kind of Christmas present for their services during the year.

The Stephen whose feast day falls on the day after Christmas was the first Christian martyr. (You can read his story in the book of Acts). He was a member of the church in Jerusalem in its very early days, and found himself involved with six others in administering the allocation of food to those in need. The apostles, who were the leaders of the church, felt that it wasn’t appropriate for them to abandon preaching

and ‘serve tables’, so they selected these seven to do the job for them. Stephen, however, quickly revealed hidden gifts as an eloquent spokesman for the Christian cause.

The Temple authorities, who had already had trouble with the apostles, were soon alerted to this new and hitherto unknown evangelist. They decided to make an example of him, thus firing a warning shot, as it were, across the bows of the apostles themselves. So they arrested Stephen and accused him of speaking against the two central elements of their religion – the ‘holy place’ (the Temple) and ‘the customs Moses handed down to us’ (the Law). It’s always dangerous to criticise a monument or a custom!

Given the right to defend himself, Stephen instead launched into an eloquent and at times biting account of Jewish history, culminating in the accusation that they had committed the worst possible sin by killing the Messiah. Inflamed by his words, his hearers abandoned any pretence of legal impartiality, rushing towards him and dragging him out of the city to a place where they began to stone him to death. Stephen, the rank and file Christian, died under a hail of rocks for claiming that Mary’s Son was the promised Messiah.

That is most probably the reason why the first martyr is honoured on the day after we celebrate the birth of the Saviour. It’s a bit like the myrrh in the gifts of the Wise Men – a reminder, as we celebrate, that the bitter shadow of a cross is never far away from this story.

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Tips to protect things from freezing

This may look silly, but it works: cover your windscreen wipers with old socks, to stop them sticking to the windscreen on a freezing morning. The RAC warns that if windscreen wipers cannot move, there is a risk the circuit will overheat and blow a fuse.

If you are cycling to work, try wearing a swimming cap under your cycling helmet – Cycling UK recommends it as a good extra layer, to keep warm.

If you need to be outside for long, wear several thin layers instead of one big chunky one. The UK Health Security Agency says that the air which gets trapped between the layers also helps keep you warm.

What's On

Celebrations of the Holy Eucharist will be held twice weekly in both our Churches:

*St. Margaret's each Sunday at 9.30am and each Wednesday at 10.00am.
St. Catwg's each Sunday at 11.00am and each Thursday at 10.00am.*

<i>Date.</i>	<i>Services and Holy Days</i>
3rd December	THE FIRST SUNDAY of ADVENT
10th December	THE SECOND SUNDAY of ADVENT
17th December	THE THIRD SUNDAY of ADVENT
24th December	THE FOURTH SUNDAY of ADVENT
25th December	THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD (Christmas Day)
31st December	THE FIRST SUNDAY of CHRISTMAS
7th January	THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST - THE FIRST SUNDAY of EPIPHANY
14th January	THE SECOND SUNDAY of EPIPHANY
21st January	THE THIRD SUNDAY of EPIPHANY
25th January	The Conversion of Paul, Apostle.
28th January	THE FOURTH SUNDAY of EPIPHANY



You are warmly invited to join us for

A CANDLE TO REMEMBER

A Service of Remembrance for our departed loved ones

During the service there will be an opportunity to light a candle in remembrance of loved ones and we will remember by name all at whose funerals we have officiated this year.

Identical services will be held at:

St. Catwg's Church, Gelligaer. 3.00pm Sunday 10th December

St. Margaret's Church, Gilfach, 6.00pm Wednesday 13th December

The District of Gelligaer

would like to
wish everyone a
Blessed and
Peaceful
Christmas and a
Happy and
Healthy New
Year.

*“For to us a child is born, to us
a son is given, and the
government will be on his
shoulders.*

*And he will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty
God, Everlasting Father, Prince
of Peace.”*

Isaiah 9:6



Christmas Greet

Wishing everyone in the district and community a Blessed and Holy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.

Fr. Gary

Wishing everyone a Blessed and peaceful Christmas.

from

Christine, Huw, Jeanette and Enid.

We wish Father Gary and all our friends at St. Margaret's a happy Christmas and many blessing.

Joan and Jane.

"May the joy of Jesus fill your heart this Christmas."

Happy Christmas

Jenn East

"Christmas Greetings to everyone in St. Margaret's and St. Catwg's' and our grateful thanks for your prayers and support during this eventful year.

God is Love"

David and Nesta Williams

With blessings for a happy and peaceful Christmas.

Corrine and Beryl

Very best wishes to everyone in St. Catwg's, St. Margaret's. Hope you all have a lovely Christmas and a happy and peaceful New Year. Every blessing,
Cheryl and Linda, St Catwg's



Greetings / Messages

Carolyn, Chris and family would like to wish everyone a Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.
God Bless.

Wishing you all a "Happy Christmas" and a "Happy, healthy and peaceful New Year."

Huw, Lynne and Family

Neil and Iris
Wish all our church family a healthy and happy Christmas and God's grace for a safe and blessed 2024.

Seasons Greetings to everyone in the District of Gelligaer, and we wish all good things in 2024

With love from,
David and Christine

Wishing all members of St. Catwg's, St. Margaret's and the community a peaceful and Blessed Christmas and a healthy and happier New Year. **Pat**

Jeanette and Gareth wish all family, friends and the community a Blessed and Peaceful Christmas.

Best wishes to everyone at St. Margaret's and St. Catwg's for a happy Christmas and a healthy and safe New Year.
Hilda and Gwyn

Wishing all our friends at St. Margaret's and St. Catwg's a happy and blessed Christmas. May the New Year be safe and healthy. God Bless
Lynne and Warren



Christmas Prayer

Father,
Thank you for creating us and for loving us so much that you sent Jesus to become one of us and to be our way to you.

This Christmas may we know the love, peace, comfort and joy that only You can give, no matter what our circumstances. And may we reflect Your light and love in this dark world to bring glory to You. In Jesus' name.
Amen.



By Daphne Kitching

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What would you like for Christmas?

A little girl went to visit Father Christmas in the local garden centre grotto. He welcomed her with a smile and the question of what she would like for Christmas.

The little girl gasped and stared up at him in horror. “Didn’t you get my email?!”

**

Church rules

Six-year-old Angie and her four-year-old brother Joel sat together for the Christmas concert in church. Joel kept giggling and whispering until his big sister had had enough. “Be quiet in church!”

“Why?” Joel demanded. “Who is going to make me?” Angie pointed to the back of the church and said: “See those two big men standing at the door? They’re hashers.”

Sudoku Challenge



5		7				3		6
			4	9	6			
						2	1	
2		5		8	9	6		
4	8		2		7		9	5
		1	3	4		7		2
	2	8						
			7	3	8			
3		9				8		7

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Solution can be found on page 43

Thoughts on our Christian pilgrimage...

We don't change God's message – His message changes us. – **Anon**

Whatever we part with for God's sake shall be made up to us in kind or kindness. – **Matthew Henry**

Affliction is God's shepherd dog to drive us back to the fold. – **Anon**

Miscellaneous thoughts on daily life...

Don't let the littleness in others bring out the littleness in you. – **Anon**

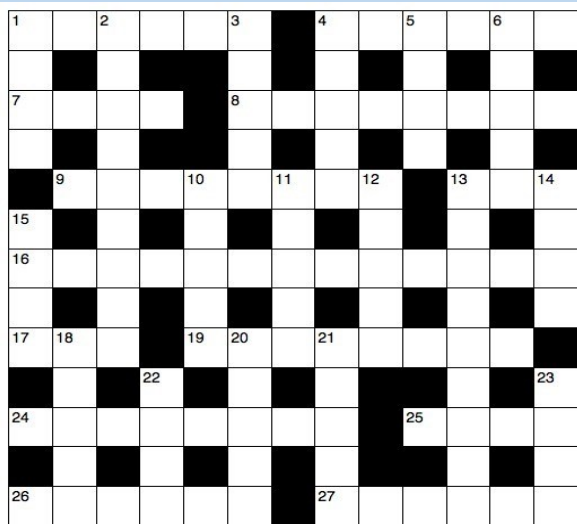
A clear conscience makes a soft pillow. – **Anon**

Those Church Bulletin notes that didn't quite work as intended.

Ladies, don't forget the jumble sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Bring your husbands.

Miss Charlene Mason sang 'I will not pass this way again,' giving obvious pleasure to the congregation.

December's Crossword



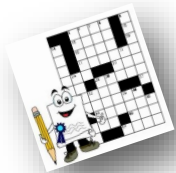
Challenge

Across

- 1 Rely (Psalm 62:7) (6)
- 4 'He stretches out the heavens like a — , and spreads them out like a tent to live in' (Isaiah 40:22) (6)
- 7 What the dove carried the olive leaf in, when it returned to Noah's ark (Genesis 8:11) (4)
- 8 Annoy (1 Samuel 1:6) (8)
- 9 Judah's last king, who ended his days as a blind prisoner in Babylon (Jeremiah 52:11) (8)
- 13 'They all — and were satisfied' (Luke 9:17) (3)
- 16 Eliphaz the Temanite was one; so was Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite (Job 2:11; 16:2) (4,9)
- 17 National Association of Evangelicals (of the USA) (1,1,1)
- 19 Popular song for New Year's Eve, Auld — — (4,4)
- 24 Able dock (anag.) (8)
- 25 The number of stones David chose for his confrontation with Goliath (1 Samuel 17:40) (4)
- 26 Elgar's best-known 'Variations' (6)
- 27 Soak (Isaiah 16:9) (6)

Down

- 1 Money owing (Deuteronomy 15:3) (4)
- 2 Conciliatory (Titus 3:2) (9)
- 3 'Do this, whenever you — it, in remembrance of me' (1 Corinthians 11:25) (5)
- 4 A group assisting in the governance of the Roman Catholic Church (5)
- 5 One of the gifts Joseph's brothers took with them on their second journey to Egypt (Genesis 43:11) (4)
- 6 'Reach out your hand and — — into my side. Stop doubting and believe' (John 20:27) (3,2)
- 10 Be outstandingly good (2 Corinthians 8:7) (5)
- 11 'What — — that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?' (Psalm 8:4) (2,3)
- 12 Horse's feet (Judges 5:22) (5)
- 13 Notice (Deuteronomy 17:4) (9)
- 14 Comes between 2 Chronicles and Nehemiah (4)
- 15 One of Israel's northern towns conquered by Ben-Hadad (1 Kings 15:20) (4)
- 18 Narnia's Lion (5)
- 20 One of the two rivers in which Naaman would have preferred to wash (2 Kings 5:12) (5)
- 21 Avarice—one of the evils that come from inside people (Mark 7:22) (5)
- 22 Knight Grand Cross of St Michael and St George (1,1,1,1)
- 23 Jacob's first wife (Genesis 29:23) (4)



Crossword solution - Page 43

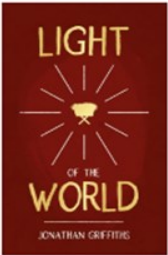
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CHRISTMAS

Book Reviews

Light of the World - Short, evangelistic giveaway

By Jonathan Griffiths, 10Publishing, £3.99



Many people are seeking for meaning or peace or hope. This Christmas, some may wonder where Jesus Christ—the figure at the heart of Christmas—fits amongst it all. The traditional image of a baby in a manger is a tender one, but we miss out on the significance of Jesus if we reduce Him to just one small part of the festivities.

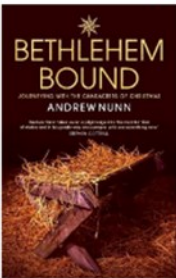
This ‘giveaway’ considers the events of the first Christmas, and how they can bring us the light and life we all search for. It explains the profound impact that Jesus’ story can have on our lives.

-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-

Bethlehem Bound -

Journeying with the Characters of Christmas

By Andrew Nunn, Canterbury Press, £12.99



It was not only Mary and Joseph who journeyed to Bethlehem – all the characters and creatures we meet in the nativity stories found their way to the manger, summoned by stars, angels or political circumstance.

Each time we celebrate Christmas, we travel there too, and open ourselves to the season; beginning with the great Advent antiphons that herald the feast, and ending with the Presentation in the Temple. Each day this book travels with a different character from Scripture and the Christian tradition – Jesse, Anna, Gabriel, the donkey, the innkeeper and his wife, the shepherds, the martyrs we commemorate at Christmas and many more.

The journey had its challenges for the original characters, but at its end was a wondrous gift from God - God’s own self in a baby laid in a manger. Bethlehem Bound invites us to embrace that gift afresh.

Church Reading / Cleaning Rotas

If anyone wishes to be on the readers rota for either church, please do not hesitate to contact the relevant church wardens.

Should you wish to be on the St. Margaret's cleaning rota please contact the relevant Church Wardens.

St. Catwg's Readers Rota

December 2023		January 2024		February 2024	
3rd	Pat Davies	7th	Cheryl Pugh	4th	Paul Thomas
10th	Helen Thomas	14th	Christine Harvey	11th	Sara Horry
17th	Joan Jenkins	21st	Joan Jenkins	18th	Cheryl Pugh
24th	Sara Horry	28th	Pat Davies	25th	Christine Harvey
31st	Cheryl Pugh				

St. Margaret's Readers Rota

December 2023		January 2024		February 2024	
3rd	Kath Llewellyn	7th	June Phillips	4th	Kath Llewellyn
10th	Neil Hazell	14th	Alex Ball	11th	Christine Thorpe
17th	Lynda Bartlett	21st	Audrey Powell	18th	Enid Mayne
24th	Jeanette Jones	28th	Chris Ball	25th	Huw Thomas
31st	Enid Mayne				

St. Margaret's Church Cleaning Rota.

Cleaning Rota for Sundays

December 2023			January 2024			February 2024		
3	Kath	June	7	Lynda Bartlett	Sue	4	Lynda Bartlett	Sue
10	Lynda Bartlett	Sue	14	Lynda Trollope	Enid	11	Lynda Trollope	Enid
17	Lynda Trollope	Enid	21	Jeanette	Audrey	18	Jeanette	Audrey
24	Jeanette	Audrey	28	Kath	June	25	Kath	June
31	Kath	June						

From the Register

Christian Funerals

November 2023

2nd	<i>Graham Lockyear RIP</i>
3rd	<i>Alan Tilley RIP</i>
16th	<i>Andrew Jones RIP</i>
20th	<i>Bernard Wall RIP</i>
21st	<i>David Jones RIP</i>
22nd	<i>Clive Jones RIP</i>
28th	<i>Pauline Taylor RIP</i>
29th	<i>Evan Parry RIP</i>

*May the souls of the faithful departed,
through the mercy of God, rest in peace.*





Gone yet not forgotten,
Although we are apart,
Your spirit lives within me,
Forever in my heart.
Until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of His hand.

Author Unknown

-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-

Prayers for the Bereaved

*May the love of God and the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ
console you and gently wipe away every tear from your eyes.
May Almighty God bless you, and look after you at this
difficult time. Amen.*

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*Lord, in our time of grief we turn to you. God of love
hear our cries. Listen to our prayers for whom
you have called out of this world. Lead them to
your kingdom of light and peace. Amen.*

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Nelson Business Centre
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Friday	09:00 - 18:00
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If you or someone you know of would like to advertise their business in our magazine please to not hesitate to contact the magazine editor on 07983 754610 or chriscorbin1961@gmail.com



Neuadd St. Catwg Community Hall

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Excellent facilities in Gelligaer, located opposite
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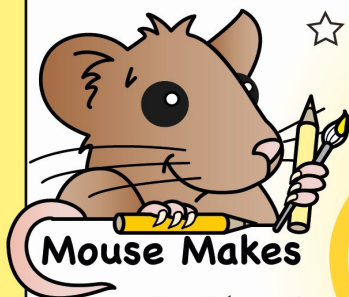
Please Contact:

Christine Harvey: 01443 833123



Christine Harvey 01443 833123 /

For the Children!



Mouse Makes



GOD'S PROMISE

Isaiah 9:6-7

CHILD • BORN • SON
GIVEN • WONDERFUL
COUNCELLOR
MIGHTY • GOD
EVERLASTING
FATHER • PRINCE
PEACE • LORD



AN ANGEL MESSENGER

Luke 1:26-38

ANGEL • GABRIEL
JOSEPH • MARY
FAVOUR • SON
JESUS • GREAT
THRONE • REIGN
FOREVER • HOLY
SERVANT • WORD

ADVENT
comes from
the Latin
'AD VENTO'
which means
ARRIVAL

In Advent we
celebrate Jesus' birth
and look forward to
the time when Jesus
will come again.



A LONG JOURNEY

Luke 2:1-20

BETHELEHEM
REGISTER • BIRTH
MANGER • INN
SHEPHERDS • FLOCK
ANGELS • JOY
GOOD NEWS • PRAISE
SAVIOUR • CHRIST



THE BEST GIFT OF ALL

John 3:16

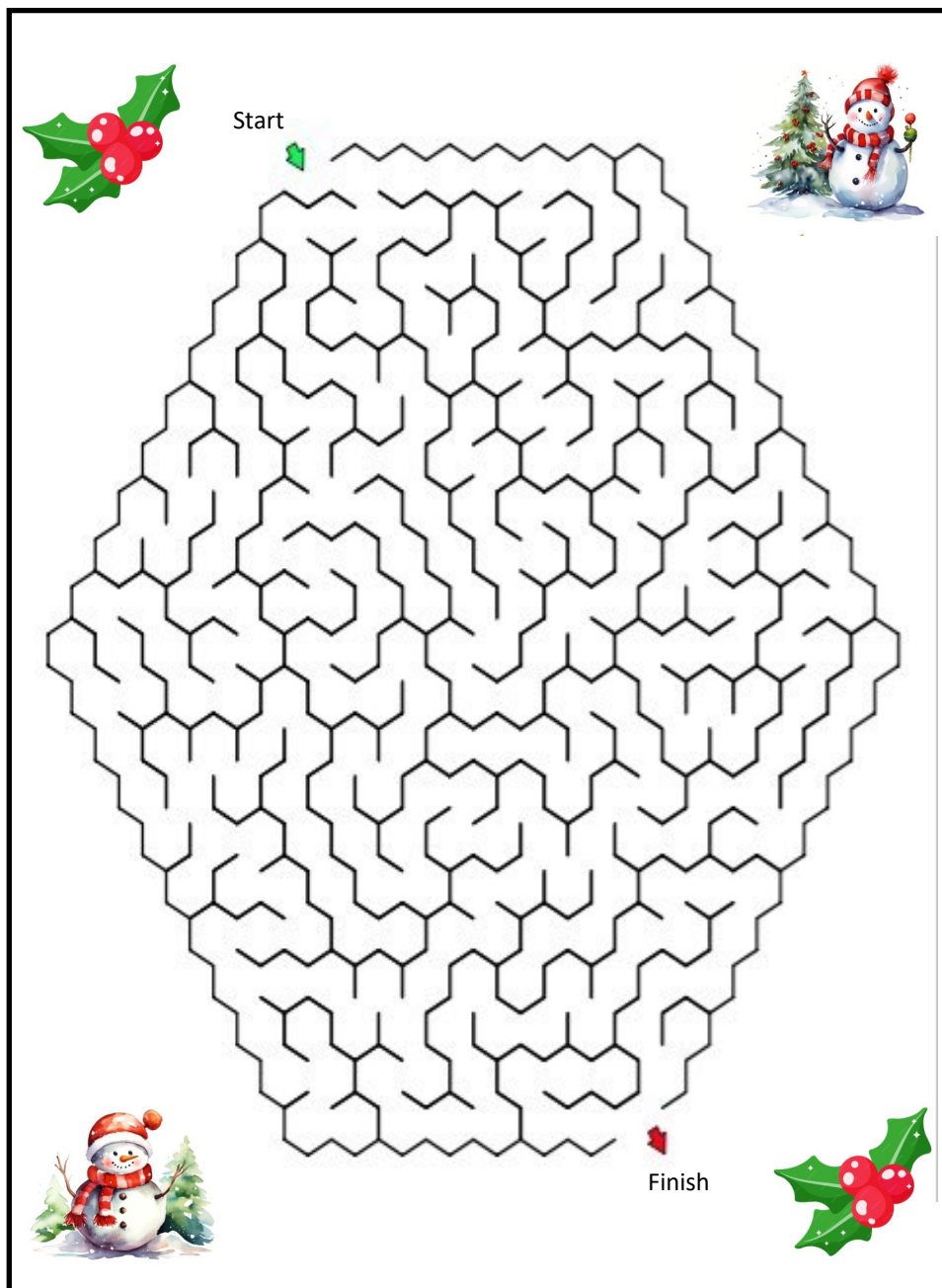
GOD • SO • LOVED
WORLD • HE • GAVE
ONLY • SON
WHOEVER • BELIEVES
ETERNAL • LIFE

V R P R I N C E L R O D
W O R D C F A T H E R E
J A G M A N G E R G E B
O W H O E V E R W I I J
S J O Y B O R N O S G E
E S L S E R V A N T N S
P P Y J C H I L D E P U
H R O S H E P H E R D S
F A V O U R E F R W S O
B I R T H S W O F O D L
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F E C O U N C E L L O R
A N G E L B J V K D V D
B E T H L E H E M G E S
L A N G E L S R G O D V
I G A B R I E L T D S M
F P G I V E N A H U O A
E E H G A V E S R W N R
S A E G R E A T O N L Y
O C H R I S T I N N J O
N E O G O O D N E W S N
F L O C K M I G H T Y B

Colour in one star each day until Christmas

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Complete the Christmas Maze!!



The Good Samaritan

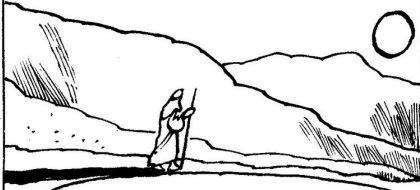
JERICO

ONCE, A LAWYER TRIED TO TRICK JESUS WITH A CLEVER QUESTION.



...WHO IS MY NEIGHBOUR?

JESUS REPLIED BY TELLING THE LAWYER A STORY.



A MAN WENT FROM JERUSALEM TO JERICO. ON THE WAY...

HE WAS ATTACKED BY ROBBERS!!



HELP!

THEY TOOK EVERYTHING HE HAD AND LEFT HIM FOR DEAD!



LATER A PRIEST PASSED BY, BUT DID NOTHING TO HELP - NOR DID THE RELIGIOUS MAN FROM A TEMPLE!

BUT A MAN FROM A FOREIGN COUNTRY STOPPED TO HELP THE INJURED MAN. HE DRESSED THE MAN'S WOUNDS, AND EVEN PAID FOR HIM TO STAY AT AN INN.

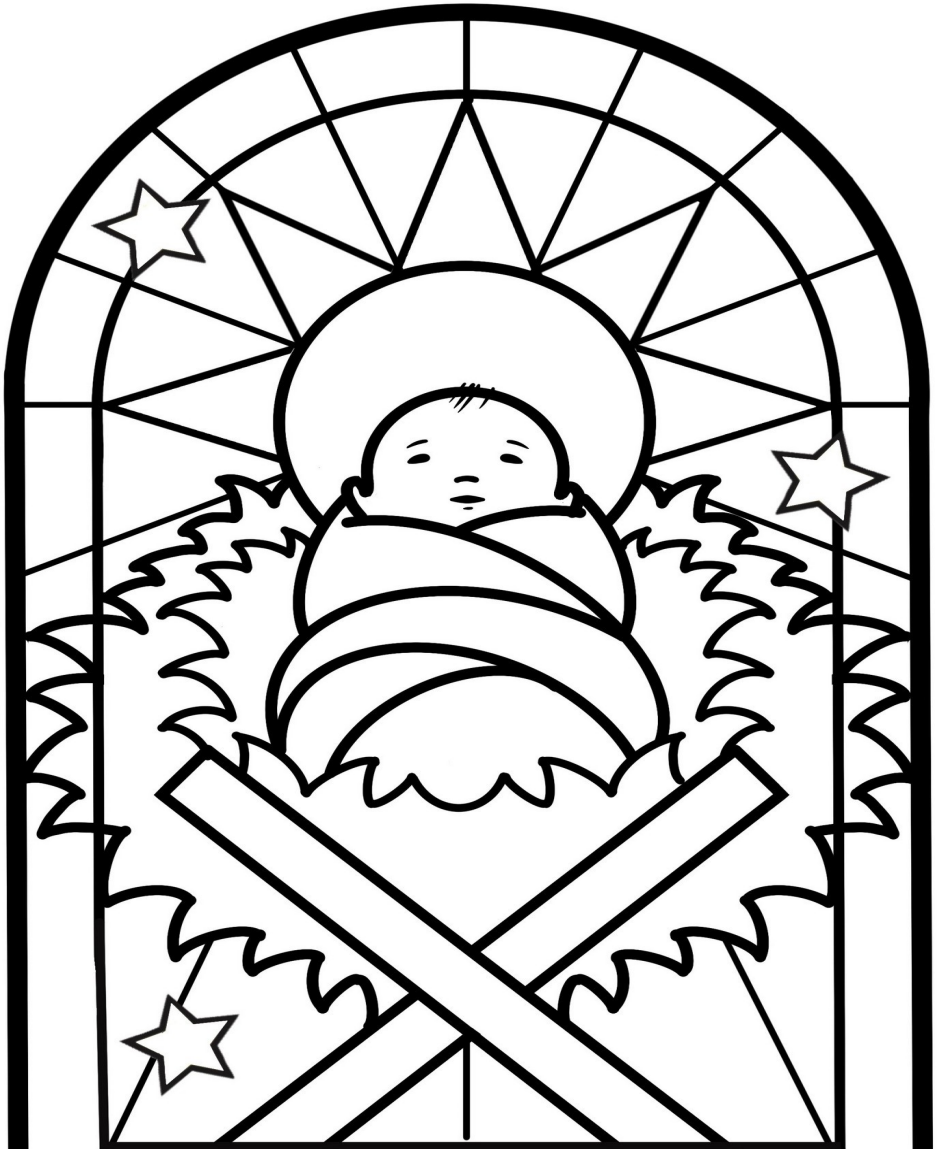


JESUS THEN ASKED "WHO WAS THE NEIGHBOUR?"

- PRIEST
- TEMPLE MAN
- FOREIGN MAN

WHICH DO YOU THINK WAS THE ONE THE LAWYER CHOSE?

Colour In!



A SAVIOUR IS BORN

Service Times

Celebrations of the Holy Eucharist will be held twice weekly in both our Churches:

*St. Catwg's each Sunday at 11.00am and each Thursday at 10.00am and
St. Margaret's each Sunday at 9.30am and each Wednesday at 10.00am.*

Both of our Churches have a friendly and welcoming atmosphere where you can worship our Lord, Jesus Christ. Everybody is welcome to attend any of our services listed below. If it is your first visit to the Parish and you are new to our Church please do not hesitate to make yourself known to us.

SUNDAY

9.30 am. Sung Eucharist at St. Margaret's Church
1st Sunday of each Month - Family Services

11.00 am. Sung Eucharist at St. Catwg's Church

WEDNESDAY

10.00 am. Holy Eucharist at St. Margaret's Church,
followed by Tea and Coffee

THURSDAY

10.00 am. Holy Eucharist at St. Catwg's Church

General Disclaimer

The appearance of comments, articles, advertisements, hyperlinks, or statements made within our District magazine do not necessarily represent the views of the District of Gelligaer Wardens and Committee. While we aim to include accurate and up-to-date information at the time of publication, we make no warranties or representations as to the accuracy. We therefore assume no liability or responsibility for any error or omission in the content.

Directory of Contacts

Should you wish to contact a specific group that meets in our churches, please use the relevant telephone number from the list below.

Thank You!

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Family History Research: Carolyn Corbin Tel: 07983677360
 Email. carolyncorbin63@aol.com

Mothers' Union:

Branch Leader Kath Llewellyn. Tel: 01443 829658
 Branch Secretary
 Branch Treasurer June Phillips. Tel: 01443 835977

Community Dance Group: June Phillips. Tel: 01443 835977

Flower Arranging Group: Nesta Williams. Tel: 01443 831009

Arts and Crafts Group: June Phillips. Tel: 01443 835977

Neuadd St. Catwg's Hall: Christine Harvey. Tel: 01443 833123
(Bookings and Enquiries)

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Solutions to this month's puzzles.

5	9	7	8	1	2	3	4	6
1	3	2	4	9	6	5	7	8
8	4	6	5	7	3	2	1	9
2	7	5	1	8	9	6	3	4
4	8	3	2	6	7	1	9	5
9	6	1	3	4	5	7	8	2
7	2	8	9	5	1	4	6	3
6	5	4	7	3	8	9	2	1
3	1	9	6	2	4	8	5	7

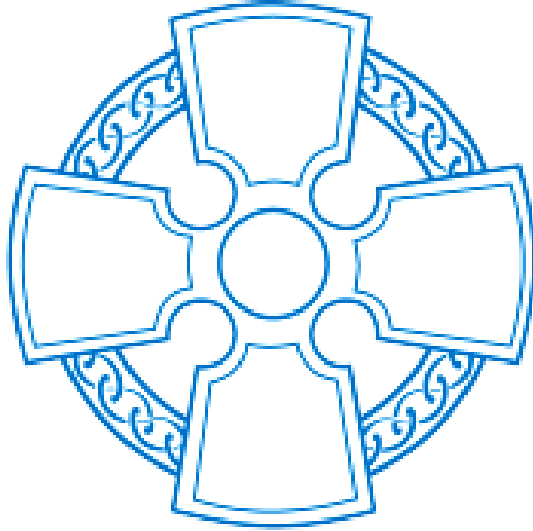
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T	C		N	I	S	I						
Z	E	D	E	K	I	A	H	A	T	E		
I	A	X		S	O	T						
J	O	B	S	C	O	M	F	O	R	T	E	R
O	L	E		A	F	E						
N	A	E	L	A	N	G	S	Y	N	E	A	
S	G		B		R		T		L			
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A		M		N		E		O		A		
E	N	I	G	M	A	D	R	E	N	C	H	

Answer to **Sudoku** on page 21

Answers to **Crossword** on page 22



ARDAL WEINIDOGAETH
TÂF RHYMNI
TAFF RHYMNEY
MINISTRY AREA



*This Publication was produced and printed by the Taff Rhymney Ministry Area,
District of Gelligaer. 2023*