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MINISTRY AREA

District of Gelligaer Magazine:

Churches of
St. Catwg's, Gelligaer
St. Margaret's, Gilfach

*A welcoming Christian
community serving the people
of the District of Gelligaer.*



The Season of Advent and Christmas

What's in this edition!

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Reader Writes.

District News/Messages.

Mothers' Union.

Books of the Bible.

For the Children!

and More.....



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Who's Who (*District of Gelligaer*)

<u>Priest</u>	<u>Reader</u>
Fr. Gary Powell	Mrs. Carolyn Corbin
Tel: 01443 832119	Tel: 07983 677360
Email: GaryPowell@cinw.org.uk	Email: carolyncorbin63@aol.com

For general enquiries please do not hesitate contact Rev. Gary Powell or one of our wardens.

Ministry Area Leader's Wardens:

Vicar's Warden:	Pam Morgan.	Tel: 07952 101179
People's Warden:	Angela Treherne.	Tel: 07925 817464

District Sub-Wardens:

Vicar's Warden:	Christine Thorpe.	Tel: 01443 837482
People's Warden:	Huw Thomas.	Tel: 01443 836613

Church Wardens

St. Catwg's Church, Gelligaer:

Vicar's Warden:	Cheryl Pugh	Tel: 01443 837961
People's Warden:	Linda Hall	Tel: 01443 833961

St. Margaret's Church, Gilfach:

Vicar's Warden:	Enid Mayne,	Tel: 01443 268988
People's Warden:	Jeanette Jones,	Tel: 01443 838908

<u>Gift Aid Secretary</u>	Huw Thomas.	Tel: 01443 836613
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<u>Safeguarding Officer</u>	Fr Gary Powell	Tel: 01443 832119
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<u>District Treasurer:</u>	Jenn East	Tel: 01443 839385
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<u>Magazine</u> :	Chris Corbin,	Tel: 01443 833452
	Email: chriscorbin1961@gmail.com	

<u>Website:</u>	www.parishofgelligaer.org.uk
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<u>Facebook Page:</u>	https://facebook.com/GelligaerParish/
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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 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.

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 once 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 church website.

Christmas is a very special time for many and 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. We remember too those suffering economic hardship who despair of what the New Year will bring. For those losing hope. It is our prayer that they may know the peace and love of God this Christmas, that their sense of hope might be restored and that they may find strength and comfort from knowing that, in all our present difficulties and challenges, Jesus is with us all. Let us, each one, seek to bring hope to all that we meet, let us work to restore trust between people and love for God.

I keep you all in my prayers.

**Every blessing from your friend and Priest,
Fr Gary.**

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Reader Writes.

Hi all,

It is again the time of year, where the schools are busy as they are full of hustle and bustle with either individual classes or the whole school excitedly preparing and practicing for their Christmas / Advent concerts or plays they will perform in front of family and friends towards the end of term



This makes me think of the meaning of the word Advent. 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 and not the commercial aspect.

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.

It was the theologian Matthew Kelly, who 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.

During this season of Advent, let us follow the words of St Mark and be ready to 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.

Wishing everyone a Blessed and peaceful Christmas.

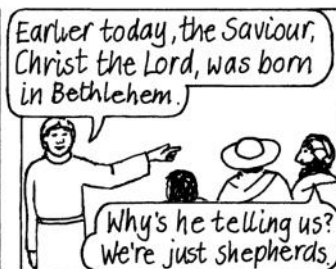
Carolyn

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Luke chapter 2 verses 8 to 20

Shepherds were paid to look after the flocks out on the hillside. Uneducated and rough, they were usually avoided, or overlooked.



Christmas throughout the Christian world.

For nearly four weeks leading up to Christmas Christians recognise a period called Advent. It means 'coming'. It is a time of spiritual preparation. 'Coming' refers to Jesus' first coming as a baby, but it also looks forward to a day when Jesus is expected to return in triumph at his 'second coming' to establish perfect justice and a new order of peace.

Originally Christians marked Advent as a time when they refrained from excessive eating and drinking. Then Christmas Day reintroduced them to the joys of feasting. Christmas celebrations lasted for twelve days, with gifts exchanged as a climax at Epiphany (6 January). Today, however, Advent is more likely to be associated with accelerating festivity, with the days following Christmas something of an anti-climax until 'twelfth night', on which decorations are removed. Many Christians worldwide are trying to revive the spirit of Advent by setting aside time to pray and address global poverty.

Christmas Day is celebrated as the anniversary of Jesus' birth, although the actual date is not known. Most Christians celebrate it on 25th December. However, the Orthodox Church (the ancient churches in Eastern Europe and parts of Asia) follows a different calendar and celebrates on 7th January. Christians make a point of taking communion on Christmas Day. Many make it the first thing they do as the clock strikes midnight.

On 6th January the Christmas festival continues with a celebration of Epiphany, which means 'the appearance'. Christians remember the visit of wise men (magi) to Jesus, bringing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. The Christmas tradition of exchanging gifts originally honoured these men, who were the first non-Jews (Gentiles) to worship Jesus. It forms a reminder that in Jesus God was giving Himself for the benefit of the entire world.

Orthodox Christians use this day to recall the baptism of Jesus as a grown man. The significance of Jesus being baptised was that He identified Himself with human beings in all their need. They mark the day by praying for God's blessing on rivers, wells and water sources.

Christmas has never been just an escapist festival for Christians. Those who treat it seriously recognise that not all the

world is able to face the days with frivolity or joy. The day after Christmas, Boxing Day, was historically marked as the feast of St Stephen. He was the first man to be put to death rather than give up his belief that Jesus was God. And two days later a day remembering the Massacre of the Innocents recalls Herod's attempt to destroy Jesus by killing all male babies in Bethlehem. Although not so widely marked as Christmas Day, it gives Christians the opportunity to pray for children in today's world who suffer as a result of the actions of adults.

*This is from: <https://christianity.org.uk/christmas-throughout-the-christian-world/>
#W9LI_xNKhsM*

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Did the Old Testament expect Jesus to come?

Yes indeed! The Old Testament contains many prophecies about a coming Messiah which were fulfilled by Jesus. Here are just some examples:

He would be born of a virgin.

Isaiah foresaw: 'Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a Son, and will call Him Immanuel.' (Isaiah 7:14)

He would be born in Bethlehem.

Micah wrote: 'But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.' (Micah 5:2)

His lineage would be of the line of David.

Jeremiah prophesied: 'The days are coming,' declares the Lord, "when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The Lord Our Righteous Saviour.' (Jeremiah 23:5-6).

He would bring healing

Isaiah looks forward to: 'Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.' (Isaiah 35:5-6) And the Psalms add that He will be the one who 'forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases.' (Psalm 103:3)

He would be betrayed

The Psalms prophesy: 'Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me.' (Psalm 41:9)

Zechariah even prophesies the price of that betrayal: ‘So they paid me thirty pieces of silver.’ (Zechariah 11:12)

He would be crucified

Psalms 22 foresees the horror of His crucifixion: ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?... All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. “He trusts in the Lord,” they say, “let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.”... I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me. My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death... Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.

And Isaiah explains this suffering: ‘Surely He took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered Him punished by God, stricken by Him, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed.’ (Isaiah 53: 4-5)

He would rise from the dead

Malachi declares: ‘But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its rays.’

And the Psalms put it this way: ‘Therefore my heart is glad ... because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. ... You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.’ (Psalm 16: 8-11) Finally, in Acts, Peter uses the Old Testament to explain Jesus to the crowd at Pentecost:

“Fellow Israelites, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne.

“Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that He was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did His body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it. Exalted to the right hand of God, He has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.... Therefore, let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.” (Acts 2: 29 – 36)

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Notices!

100 Club Winners!

October 2025

Date:	No:	Winner	Church
5th	5	Gareth Rees	St. Margaret's
12th	8	Jean McCutcheon	St. Catwg's
19th	28	Ali Shone	St. Margaret's
26th	99	Iiris	St. Margaret's



CHRISTMAS IN THE DISTRICT OF GELLIGAER

“A CANDLE TO REMEMBER”

We offer the opportunity to remember our departed loved ones at Christmas with a special service of prayer and reflection and the invitation to light a candle in remembrance of loved ones.

St. Catwg's Church, Gelligaer: Sunday, 14th December. 3.00pm

St. Margaret's Church, Gilfach: Wednesday, 17th December 6.00pm

NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS

Our annual carol service takes place in St. Catwg's Church, Gelligaer on
Sunday 21st December at 6.00pm

CHRISTMAS HOLY EUCHARIST

Christmas Eve

Christmas Eucharist 'Early Midnight Mass' – St. Catwg's - 7.00pm

Christmas Eucharist – St. Margaret's - 10.00pm

Christmas Day

St. Margaret's Church, Gilfach: 25th December 9.00am

St. Catwg's Church, Gelligaer: 25th December 10.00am

100 Club Winners!

November 2025

Date:	No:	Winner	Church
2nd	25	Lynne Thomas	St. Margaret's
9th	100	Habiba Hussein	St. Margaret's
16th	77	Audrey Phillips	St. Margaret's
23rd	41	Jeanette Jones	St. Margaret's
30th	11	June Phillips	St. Margaret's

Have you ever wondered where the name 'Jesus' comes from?

The name Jesus is a transliteration of a name that occurs in several languages. It is of Hebrew origin, 'Yehoshua', or Joshua. There is also the Hebrew-Aramaic form, 'Yesua'. In Greek, it became 'Ἰησοῦς' (*Ipsos*), and in Latin it became 'Iesus'.

The meaning of the name is 'Yahweh delivers' or 'Yahweh rescues', or 'Yahweh is salvation'. No wonder the angel Gabriel in Luke (1:26-33) told Mary to name her baby Jesus: "because He will save His people from their sins."



Smile Lines

I'm proud to announce that I have completed the first item on my bucket list. I have the bucket.

Somebody just threw a handful of Omega 3 tablets at me! It's okay, I only suffered super fish oil injuries.



District of Gelligaer Website

Scan the QR code on your smart phone, then open in browser to visit our website or visit us on

<https://www.parishofgelligaer.org.uk>

God in the Arts

Editor: The Revd Michael Burgess surveys works of sacred art that can be found in various museums...you can see the image by googling the title of the painting and the artist. If you use the graphic supplied, please credit: 'Lucas Cranach's 'Adam and Eve, public domain'

‘He gave us eyes to see them’: Madonna and Child from Donatello’s workshop



Each month during this year we have visited art galleries and museums in England that are often overlooked by the tourist trail, but which contain treasures that can inspire and deepen our Christian faith. Our final visit in this series is to a gracious, elegant Georgian villa rejoicing in the odd name of the Ranger’s House. It is outside the western wall of Greenwich Park in London and is home to the Wernher collection of art.

Julius Wernher was a diamond magnate who died in 1912, and in his lifetime, he amassed an amazing array of 700 works that make up this collection. There are paintings by Joshua Reynolds and Romney, Renaissance jewellery, and a marble statue by Bergonzoli, ‘The Love of Angels.’

But this month we focus on another love – the love of a mother and child by the workshop of Donatello. When I was a student I visited Florence for the first time, and I can always remember the impact of entering the Bargello and being greeted by the sculptures of Donatello. It was a special moment of revelation to be able to look around and wonder at the glorious works of this sculptor filling the second floor of the castle.

By contrast the Madonna and Child in the Ranger’s House is a miniature, a bronze plaque just 4 inches square. Our Lady is depicted in classical profile with flowing robes and wavy hair, but the mood is one of tenderness as she cradles the Christ-Child. She holds His left hand in hers, while He looks down at something that has caught His attention. Perhaps it is a noise at the stable door or the sound of an animal in the Bethlehem night. Perhaps it is St Joseph getting everything ready for the Holy Family to leave. We don’t know, but it is another special moment of revelation caught in this little plaque. It may not be by Donatello himself, but we sense the master overseeing the creation of this work.

At Christmas we ponder the mystery of infinity caught in a little space, the cradle at Bethlehem, just as the mystery of love, maternal and divine, is

caught in the little space of this plaque. Margaret Rizza's carol, 'Jesus is our joy' captures the mood of wonder, joy and hope as we open the stable door to see the love of a mother and her new-born baby expressed here and at the heart of the Christmas gospel:

*'Lovely in your littleness,
longing for our lowliness,
searching for our meekness.....*

*Held in Mary's tenderness,
tiny hands are raised to bless,
touching us with God's caress.*

*Joy then in God's graciousness,
peace comes with gentleness,
filling hearts with gladness.'*

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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.

The Incarnation: fearfully and wonderfully made

My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. Psalm 139:15-16



You began life as a single cell. For a few hours you were a miniscule but highly complex blob of jelly, until it began to divide: two cells, four, eight, sixteen, a ball, a hollow ball, and then something more recognisably like a living organism. You were still tiny, but developing a nervous system, a head, a body, arms and legs.

Until recently I hadn't thought much about Jesus being an embryo. Somehow, I find that thought even more shocking than His birth. How could God, who made the universe, have become something so completely and utterly vulnerable? Maybe in the past, when the development of a child happened in 'secret', it was possible just to let that part of the Christmas story go untold. Today, when we see images of a developing child, or even embryos outside the womb, it is harder to ignore the process of Jesus developing into a baby. The incarnation meant that God's Son went through all the stages in the diagram in my

developmental biology textbook: ‘zygote’, ‘morula’, ‘blastocyst’, implantation, and so on.

Jesus was there in the beginning, and all life owes its existence to Him. But instead of remaining aloof, He chose to become one of us. The Son of God shared the same kind of DNA as every other organism on the planet. He knows what it feels like to have a body, to feel hungry and thirsty, pain and pleasure, dark and light.

In Psalm 139, the writer is meditating on God’s intimate knowledge of him, which began when he was an embryo. There is nothing God doesn’t know about him, and even darkness cannot obscure him from God’s sight. The incarnation means that God’s intimacy with us now extends even further. He became one of us, lived alongside us, and shared our very fragile material nature.

The transcendent God is also immanent, longing for us to relate to Him as Father. He became as fragile as we are so He could rescue us from the messes we so often find ourselves in. With His help, we can remember what it means to be fearfully and wonderfully made.

Reproduced by permission from Merry Christmas Everyone: A festive feast of stories, poems and reflection, Edited by Wendy H. Jones, Amy Robinson & Jane Clamp (Association of Christian Writers, 2018)

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Friends of Gilfach

Just a short note to thank everyone for their continued support since our change to Friends of Gilfach. It has been quite a journey getting to this point from Mothers’ Union. We continue with our monthly meetings, coffee mornings and quiz afternoons. They are all supported as well as when we were Mothers’ Union, which is good. We have a few new members of the community attending our coffee mornings and quiz afternoons and as word travels hopefully this will continue. It is good fellowship and fun. Thank you all.

I know you will all be aware that Jeanette’s husband, Gareth, died in November and we all give our heartfelt sympathy to Jeanette and her family. She is blessed with a loving and supportive family, and so many loyal and close friends and we all grieve with her.

We will be going to Rolling Jacks for a Dolly Parton tribute for our Christmas lunch and our coffee morning will be Christmas cake and mince pies. I hope you all have a wonderful and peaceful Christmas and look forward to seeing you all in the New Year when our A.G.M. will give us an opportunity to decide who we need to support with the

money raised. Please bring any suggestions you have and they will be considered. Thanks to everyone who has helped this year especially when I haven't been able to attend any function. It is very much appreciated. A very Happy Christmas and peaceful and healthy New Year.

God Bless

Kath

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Christingle, a generous present from the Moravians

It is the Moravians whom we have to thank for bringing us the Christingle. Especially one Moravian clergyman: John de Watteville.

On 20th December, 1747, John de Watteville was taking a children's service in his Moravian church in Marienborn, Germany. He led the children in some hymns, and read out verses which the children themselves had written to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Then he explained to the children that true happiness only comes through knowing Jesus. Jesus, said John de Watteville, "has kindled in each little heart a flame which keeps burning to their joy and our happiness".

John de Watteville then went on to illustrate that 'flame'. He gave each child a little lighted wax candle, tied around with a red ribbon. He ended his service with a little prayer: "Lord Jesus, kindle a flame in these children's hearts, that theirs like Thine become".

The visual aid was a great success with the children; for the Marienborn Diary for that day concludes: "hereupon the children went full of joy with their lighted candles to their rooms and so went glad and happy to bed".

The candle and red ribbon were remembered the following year, and the following after that.... The years came and went, and as the Moravians began to travel beyond Germany, so they took the custom with them: to Labrador, to Pennsylvania, to Tibet and Suriname, to the Caribbean and South Africa. In each country the Christians adapted it for their own use.

No one knows for certain when the word 'Christingle' was first used with regard to the custom. No one even knows where the word

‘Christingle’ comes from. Some people say it is from the old Saxon word ‘ingle’ (fire), meaning ‘Christ-fire or light’. Another theory is that it derives from the German ‘engel’ (angel), meaning ‘Christ-angel’.

In any event, the symbolism of Christingle gradually developed, until today the Moravians in the British Province use an orange, representing the world, with a lighted candle to represent Christ, the Light of the World. Nuts, raisins and sweets on cocktail sticks around the candle represent God’s bounty and goodness in providing the fruits of the earth. Red paper, forming a frill around the base of the candle, reminds us of the blood of Christ shed for all people on the cross at Calvary.

In Moravian churches, the Christingle Service is usually held on the Sunday before Christmas or on Christmas Eve. The website for the Moravian Church says: “We are glad that the Moravian Church has been able to make this contribution to the wider Christian world.”

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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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And there were shepherds...

In his gospel, Luke tells how the shepherds in the fields were keeping watch over their flocks when they were terrified by the sudden arrival of heavenly angels, surrounded by the glory of the Lord. And the message of the angel that night has rung down the centuries:

“I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” (Luke 2:10,11)

And so, the first people to greet the Saviour were not rich VIPS, but humble shepherds. And in turn, it was the shepherds who became the first evangelists: for they would have gone home to their families and neighbours that night with the amazing news of what they had seen.

Meanwhile, for Mary there followed a time of reflection. She gathered up in her mind all her impressions, and all that the shepherds had shared about the angelic visit. She knew it was treasure, and not to be squandered. Then she quietly pondered in her heart the meaning and significance of all that had happened, so that she would never forget.

Exuberant witness and quiet contemplation are not opposites. They are, in fact, good companions in the spiritual life!

So, this Christmas, let’s be filled with the joy that the Saviour has also been born ‘to us’. May our lives reflect the glory of His coming, even in a small way. May our interactions with friends, colleagues and families during this Advent season reflect the great joy that the angels brought that night, so long ago.

Looking at God.

Editor: Canon Paul Hardingham continues his series on the books of the Bible.

What's the Big Idea? An Introduction to Books of the New Testament: Philippians

This letter was written to Christians in the Macedonian city of Philippi when Paul was in prison, probably in Rome (60-62 AD). His primary purpose in writing was to thank them for the gift they had sent him upon learning of his imprisonment. However, he also uses the letter as an opportunity to report on his situation; to encourage the Philippians to stand firm in the face of persecution and rejoice regardless of circumstances; to exhort the church to live in humility, fellowship, and unity; to commend Epaphroditus and Timothy to them; and to warn them about false teaching. This included Judaizers who were persuading the Philippians to submit to circumcision.



The central message of Philippians focuses on joy (the word occurs some 16 times!). For Paul, joy isn't simply an emotional response to favourable circumstances. True joy is to be found through a relationship with the resurrected and glorified Christ. Death ceases to be an enemy, because through it we can more fully enjoy the presence of Jesus. This joy is also rooted in an expectation of the return of Jesus, which gives urgency to the task of sharing the gospel. So, Paul begins his letter by thanking the Philippians for their partnership together in the work of the gospel through the offerings they have sent.

Paul also powerfully appeals to the Philippians to be of 'one mind' in pursuing humility and unity. He gives the example of Jesus himself 'who made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant' (2:7) to the point of dying the death of a common criminal. 'Therefore', say Paul, 'God exalted him to the highest place' (2:9). This 'Jesus attitude' is the one that all believers should share.

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The Ven John Barton explains the meaning of the colours of the vicars' stoles.

Why is the priest wearing white today?



You may have noticed that the Minister who officiates at Church Services may wear a long, thin scarf which is called a stole.

This can be white, purple, red or green.

White is for festive occasions like Christmas and Easter, christenings and weddings. Purple is worn during Advent and Lent, when we bring to mind our sins and seek God's forgiveness, in preparation for the wonderful seasons of Christmas and Easter. Red at Pentecost, symbolises the fire of the Holy Spirit, and on Saints Days it signifies that many of them (and some today) were martyred because they were Christians. Green, marking growth and hope is worn for the rest of the year.

So, white for 'best', purple for penitence, red for the Holy Spirit and the blood of the Martyrs, and green for growth.

You will also spot the same changing colours for items on the Altar-Table at the beginning and end of the Service of Holy Communion. The Burse is a flat, square case holding a linen cloth called the corporal, on which the vessels used in Holy Communion are placed. The Veil covers them until they are used.

The vessels are called Paten and Chalice. The Paten is like a plate on which the bread is placed. A bowl, called a Ciborium, may be used for the same purpose. The Chalice is a cup for the wine. Because the bread and wine represent the Body and Blood of Christ, which He sacrificed for us when He was crucified, we handle them with care.

The minister's ceremonial robes, called vestments, and the vessels all point to something greater. In one of St Paul's letters in the New Testament, he explains in these words that receiving the Sacrament of Holy Communion has past, present and future significance: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

Where did the Wise Men come from?

Magi from the East – it isn't a lot to go on. The Magi had originally been a religious caste among the Persians. Their devotion to astrology, divination and the interpretation of dreams led to an extension in the meaning of the word, and by the first century the Magi in Matthew's gospel could have been astrologers from outside of Persia. Some scholars believe they might have come from what was then Arabia Felix, or as we would say today, southern Arabia.

It is true that in the first century astrology was practised there, and it was the region where the Queen of Sheba had lived. She of course had visited Solomon and would have heard the prophecies about how one day a Messiah would be born to the Israelites and become their king.

Matthew's gospel (chapter 2) is clear that the Magi asked Herod: 'Where is the One who has been born king of the Jews? We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him.' So it is possible that in southern Arabia the Queen of Sheba's story of how a Messiah would one day be sent to the Israelites had survived. Certainly, there are a number of other early legends that connect southern Arabia with Solomon's Israel.

To many people this makes sense: that the ancient stories of a Messiah, linked to later astrological study, prompted these alert and god-fearing men to the realisation that something very stupendous was happening in Israel. They realised that after all these centuries, the King of the Jews, the Messiah, was about to be born.

One more interesting thing that gives weight to the theory that the Magi came from southern Arabia is this: if you study any map of Palestine as it was during biblical times, you will find that the old Arabian caravan routes all entered Palestine 'from the East'.



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



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



Christmas Greetings from
2021

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

Wishing everyone at St Margaret's a peaceful and joyous Christmas and a Happy New Year love from **Chris, Alex, Georgia and Florence xx**

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

Neil and Iiris, send all our Church family at St. Margaret's and St. Catwg's our love and all good wishes at this Holy and joyful time.

Celebrating the true meaning of Christmas with you - Jesus. Best wishes for 2026. **Jenn**

Wishing everyone a Blessed and peaceful Christmas.
Christine, Huw, Jeanette and Enid

Wishing you peace and joy at Christmas and in the New Year.
Huw and Lynne

Wishing everyone a very happy and blessed Christmas and a peaceful New Year.
Lynne and Warren



m around the District

5



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 and Joan.

Wishing all family, friends and the community a Blessed and Peaceful Christmas.

Jeanette

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

Joan and Jane.

Very best wishes to all our friends in Saint Catwg's and Saint Margaret's. Hope you all have a blessed Christmas and a happy and peaceful New Year.

Cheryl and Linda.

"Christmas Greetings to all at St. Margaret's and St. Catwg's and thanks for friendship throughout the year."

David and Nesta

Seasons Greetings to everyone in the Parish of Gelligaer.

With love from,

David and Christine

With blessings for a happy and peaceful Christmas.

Corrine and Beryl

To all at St. Margaret's Church best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New year.

Audrey & Ray Powell

Best wishes to everyone at St. Margaret's and St. Catwg's, for Christmas and the new year.

Sue Stevens

December's Sudoku Challenge



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

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Solution can be found on page 43



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 14th December
St. Margaret's Church, Gilfach, 6.00pm Wednesday 17th December*



January's Magazine 2026

If you wish to contribute to our magazine, please can you forward any news, articles etc, to me by Monday 22nd December, for inclusion in the January's edition.

Many Thanks Chris (email: chriscorbin1961@gmail.com)

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.”

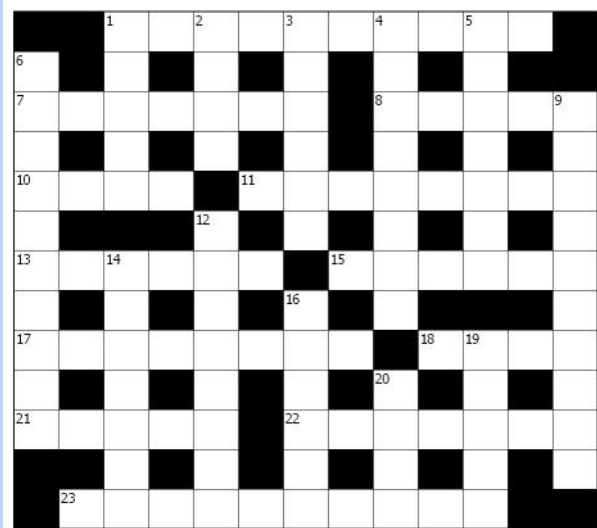
Father Christmas



Of course, I had expected that by the age of seven it was inevitable that my son would begin to have serious thoughts about Father Christmas. Sure enough, one day near Christmas he suddenly said: “Mum, I know something about Father Christmas, the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy.” Taking a deep breath, I asked him what that might be. “Easy,” he said, “They are all nocturnal.”



December's Crossword



Challenge

Across

- 1 Provisional meeting place of God and the Jews (Exodus 25:9) (10)
- 7 David's third son, killed when his head got caught in a tree during a battle with his father (2 Samuel 18:14,15) (7)
- 8 They ruled much of the west coast of South America in the 15th and early 16th centuries (5)
- 10 Small deer of European and Asian extraction (4)
- 11 Seized control of (Numbers 21:25) (8)
- 13 Terror (Luke 24:5) (6)
- 15 First World War heroine shot by the Germans in Brussels, Nurse Edith (6)
- 17 Stormy (8)
- 18 A bitter variety of this, together with lamb and unleavened bread, was the Passover menu for anyone unclean (Numbers 9:11) (4)
- 21 Arson (anag.) (5)
- 22 How John Newton described God's grace in his well-known hymn (7)

23 Habitation (Isaiah 27:10) (10)

Down

- 1 and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8) (5)
- 2 The wicked man flees though no one pursues, but the righteous are as ... as a lion (Proverbs 28:1) (4)
- 3 One of the exiles, a descendant of Parosh, who married a foreign woman (Ezra 10:25) (6)
- 4 He escaped from Nob when Saul killed the rest of his family and joined David (1 Samuel 22:19,20) (8)
- 5 City and lake in Central Switzerland (7)
- 6 Offer your bodies as living , holy and pleasing to God (Romans 12:1) (10)
- 9 Pouches carried by horses (Genesis 49:14) (10)
- 12 One who accepts government by God (8)
- 14 Aromatic substance commonly used in Jewish ritual (Exodus 30:1) (7)
- 16 He asked Jesus, 'What is truth?' (John 18:38) (6)
- 19 Are (Romans 13:1) (5)
- 20 You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will ... his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21) (4)

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Keep it a surprise

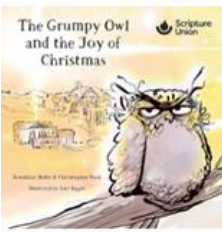
Three-year-old Lily was helping her mother wrap a present for her father. While wrapping, her mother told Lily about keeping the present a secret so it would be a surprise. After the present was wrapped, Lily proudly put it under the tree.

When her father asked her if he could shake it and guess what's inside, she said very seriously, "No, that's not possible. T-shirts don't rattle."

Book Reviews

The Grumpy Owl and the Joy of Christmas

By Jonathan Maltz and Christopher Poch, CHP, £5.49



Here is a beautifully illustrated children's nativity story told from the unusual angle of a grumpy owl who lived in a little old empty barn in Bethlehem.

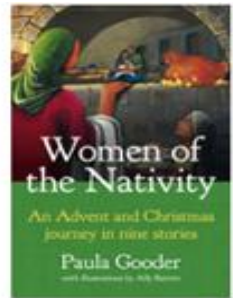
When a man, a woman and their donkey burst into his barn, making a lot of noise, the grumpy owl decides to fly away to somewhere quiet where he can be grumpy in peace. But can he find such a place, or will he return to his barn in time for a big, not-at-all grumpy, surprise?

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Women of the Nativity – an Advent and Christmas Journey in Nine Stories

By Paula Gooder, CHP, £9.89

Following on from her bestselling *Women of Holy Week*, Paula Gooder uses her extensive biblical expertise and storytelling skills to recreate the events of the nativity, from the promise of a future people to Sarah, to the presentation in the temple and the encounter with Anna, the prophet.



The story is told from the perspective of nine women in all including Mary, Elizabeth, Rachel, and others whom scripture records or tradition has imagined, such as the innkeeper's wife. As we hear the familiar stories afresh through their words, the wonder of the incarnation and its consequences for good and for ill, come to vivid life in a new way.

Each story is accompanied by a painting by the priest-artist, Ally Barrett. This will be widely welcomed by all who love Paula's writing and respect her biblical expertise as well as those looking for fresh inspiration for seasonal services from Advent to Candlemas.

Church Reading / Cleaning Rotas

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

St. Catwg's Church - Readers Rota

December 2025		January 2026		February 2026	
7th	Pat Davies	4th	Cheryl Pugh	1st	Paul Thomas
14th	Paul Thomas	11th	Janeve Manca	8th	Cheryl Pugh
21st	Cheryl Pugh	18th	Christine Harvey	15th	Janeve Manca
28th	Janeve Manca	25th	Pat Davies	22nd	Christine Harvey

St. Margaret's Church - Readers Rota

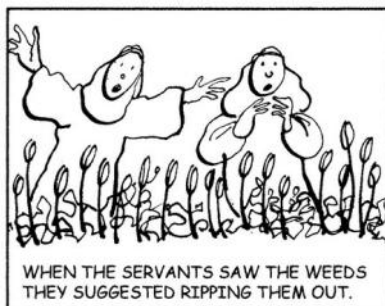
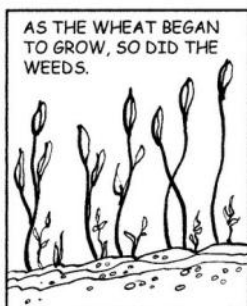
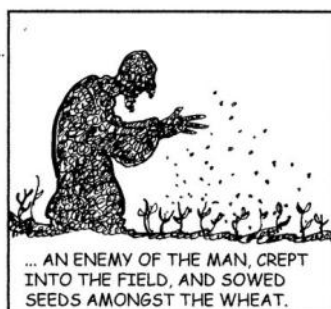
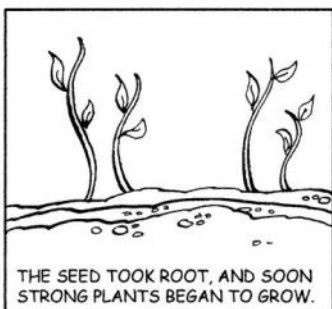
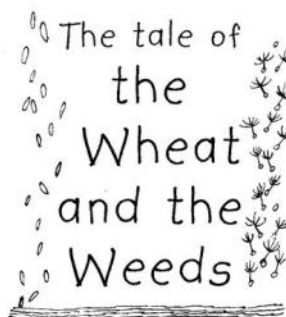
December 2025		January 2026		February 2026	
7th	Kath Llewellyn	4th	June Phillips	1st	Kath Llewellyn
14th	Enid Mayne	11th	Alex Ball	8th	Christine Thorpe
21st	Huw Thomas	18th	Audrey Powell	15th	Enid Mayne
28th	Jenn East	25th	Chris Ball	22nd	Huw Thomas

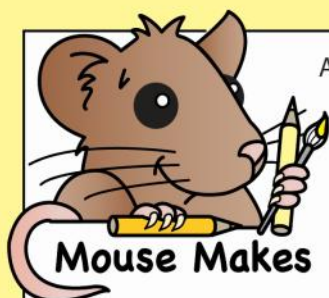
Should you wish to be on the St. Margaret's cleaning rota please contact the relevant Church Wardens.

St. Margaret's Cleaning Rota

December 2025			January 2026			February 2026		
7	Lynda Bartlett	Sue	4	Lynda Bartlett	Sue	1	Lynda Bartlett	Sue
14	Lynda Trollope	Enid	11	Lynda Trollope	Enid	8	Lynda Trollope	Enid
21	Jennette	Audrey	18	Jennette	Audrey	15	Jennette	Audrey
28	Kath	June	25	Kath	June	22	Kath	June

For the Younger Generation.





Mouse Makes

At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus,
God's Son and our Saviour
coming into the world as a baby,
and we look forward to the time
when Jesus will come again,
not as a baby but as the
King of kings and Lord of lords!

read

John 14:3

A baby needs clothes
to keep warm like
a snugly sleep suit
or a vest and nappy.

What were you dressed in?

Jesus was wrapped in

.....
read Luke 2:7

A baby needs somewhere
to be born like at home
or in a hospital.

Where were you born?

Jesus was born
in a stable in

.....
read Luke 2:1-6

A baby needs
somewhere
to sleep like
a crib or a cot.
*What did you
sleep in?*

Jesus slept in a

.....
read Luke 2:7

A baby needs
a name.

*What name were
you called?*

Jesus was given
a special name
that had a
special meaning.

read

Matthew 1:21-23



HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

NADOLIG LLAWEN ★ NOLLAIG CHRÏDHEIL ★ NOLLAG SHONA

JOYEUX NOËL • FELIZ NAVIDAD • BUON NATALE • GOD JUL • FROHE WEIHNACHTEN

Complete the WORDsearch!

m	a	r	y	h	m	a	n	g	e	r	u
s	p	a	l	a	c	e	p	m	q	k	s
k	l	b	c	h	r	i	s	t	h	w	h
y	q	h	e	a	r	d	e	s	e	n	e
q	p	j	c	t	o	z	e	n	a	i	p
p	r	e	n	g	h	f	n	t	v	g	h
c	a	r	e	f	u	l	l	y	e	h	e
h	i	l	l	s	i	d	e	o	n	t	r
c	s	a	v	i	o	u	r	h	c	m	d
s	i	n	g	i	n	g	w	n	e	k	s
a	n	g	e	l	b	a	b	y	a	m	s
r	g	l	o	r	y	g	o	o	d	e	o

shepherds

Christ

Saviour

glory

news

praising

hillside

singing

baby

message

night

carefully

palace

flocks

manger

good

heard

sky

angel

Bethlehem

heaven

Mary

God

seen

Colour in!



From the Register

Christian Funerals

November 2025

13th

Mrs Judith Miles RIP

14th

Mr Henry Hamer RIP

20th

Mrs June Bennett RIP

***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

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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.***

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

*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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Please Contact:

Christine Harvey: 01443 833123



Christine Harvey 01443 833123 / Booking Secretary.
Facebook Page: <https://facebook.com/Neuadd St Catwg Community Hall>

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

Friends of Gilfach:

Leader Kath Llewellyn. Tel: 01443 829658
Secretary
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.

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

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

Answer to **Sudoku** on page 21

Answers to **Crossword** on page 22

*This Publication was produced and printed by the Taff Rhymney Ministry Area,
District of Gelligaer. 2025*



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MINISTRY AREA



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