



ARDAL WEINIDOGAETH  
TÂF RHYMNI  
TAFF RHYMNEY  
MINISTRY AREA

## District of Gelligaer Magazine:

*Churches of*

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

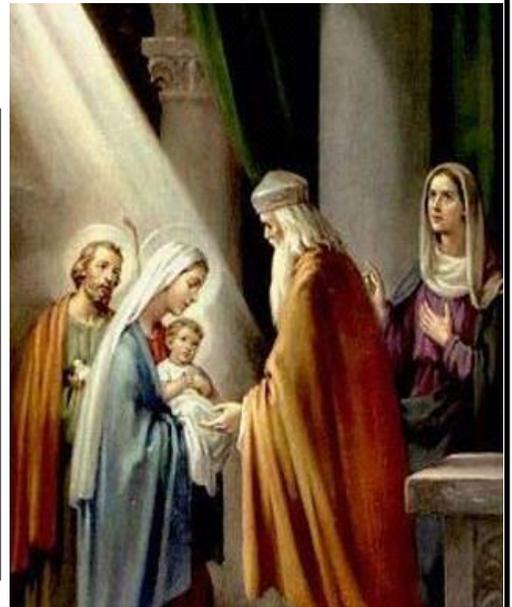
*A welcoming Christian  
community serving the people  
of the District of Gelligaer.*



The Visit of the Magi

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

**THE PRESENTATION OF  
CHRIST (Candlemas)**



### *What's in this edition!*

*Greetings from the Rectory.*

*Reader Writes.*

*District News/Messages.*

*Mothers' Union.*

*Prayers of the Bible.*

*For the Children!*

*and More.....*

*Edition No:21    January/February 2026    Cover Price: £1.00*

## Who's Who (*District of Gelligaer*)

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

**Gift Aid Secretary** ..... Huw Thomas.      Tel: 01443 836613

**Safeguarding Officer** ..... Fr Gary Powell      Tel: 01443 832119

**District Treasurer:** ..... Jenn East      Tel: 01443 839385

**Magazine** : ..... Chris Corbin,      Tel: 01443 833452  
 Email: chriscorbin1961@gmail.com

**Website:** ..... [www.parishofgelligaer.org.uk](http://www.parishofgelligaer.org.uk)

**Facebook Page:** ..... <https://facebook.com/GelligaerParish/>

## Greetings from the Rectory

*Dear friends,*

I hope that you are all well and have enjoyed a holy and peaceful Christmas and New Year. With our celebration of the Feast of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, or Candlemas, at the beginning of February we come to the end of the Christmas-Epiphany Season of Light and Revelation, our celebrations of the miracle of the incarnation, of the Word made Flesh, of God coming to live among us in the person of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Already it is February, isn't that hard to believe, and our attention is drawn to the coming of season of Lent as the year stretches out before us.



As we look forward we look to the season of preparation that is Lent. During Lent we will prepare to travel with Jesus on his final journey to Jerusalem. We will witness once again the depth of his love for us as he gives himself to death on the Cross, as he sacrifices himself for our sins and we will celebrate the joy of the resurrection and the Good News that Jesus is alive.

As the world becomes a less stable place it is a great comfort to know that the living Lord Jesus is with us, walking alongside us, encouraging and strengthening us as we journey through our own lives towards our eternal home in the Father's house in heaven. The Good News that in Jesus Christ the risen Lord, God is with us every day. We

are strengthened as we walk together in prayer and fellowship supporting one another in love and faith with Christ at our head. As we approach the beginning of Lent please keep a look out for details of our Lenten activities for this year and think about how we can prepare ourselves to mark Holy Week and Easter this year.

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

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

## The Epiphany Of Our Lord



The Epiphany of Our Lord is the Christian feast observed on January 6th. The word “epiphany” comes from the Greek epiphainen, a verb that means “to shine upon,” “to manifest,” or “to make known.” Thus, the feast of the Epiphany celebrates the many ways that Christ has made Himself known to the world, mainly the three events that manifested the mission and divinity of Christ: the visit of the Magi (Matthew 2:1-12), the baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:9-11), and the miracle at Cana (John 2:1-11).

### What is the significance of Candlemas Day?

This Christian festival commemorates the presentation of Jesus at the Temple of Jerusalem, referring to him as the light of the people of Israel. On this day, Christians take candles to be blessed in church, while for those with a sweet tooth, this day is also a chance to eat pancakes. Traditionally, Candlemas marked the end of the extended Christmas season in the Church, which began with the Nativity and included Epiphany.



## Reader Writes.

The season of Christmas as drawn to a close with our Candlemas service. During the month of January, we celebrated the Feast of the Epiphany, where we had the opportunity to think of the three wise men and their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh that they presented to the infant Jesus.



When we think of the three wise men, various images come to mind - the poem *The Journey of the Magi* by T.S. Elliott, (a favourite of mine), gives a wonderful description of the difficult journey that both the magi and their camels endured. Maybe images of Kings in luxurious robes with their camels decked with the gifts or perhaps the words of the carol “We Three Kings” describes to us who the three kings are, where they come from, what their gifts are and speaks of their praising God.

If we reflect on the Feast of the Epiphany it gives us a reminder that we all have gifts to offer in Christ’s world. It could be easy for us to distance ourselves from the story of the Epiphany, to see it as possibly a movie, but it is our tradition and scriptures which remind us that we, too, have a part to play in the great story of salvation. Unlike a film, our roles may not be on a cinema screen but we each have unique gifts to offer.

We are reminded that we are called, first and foremost, to bring our gifts to the Christ Child who was born in a stable in Bethlehem. If we take away the costumes and drama a film may show and the decorations of this feast, we are able to see the story at its finest whereby the gifts we offer to God are transformed into something greater than we could ever imagine – the gift of eternal life.

**Carolyn**

# Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in  
1 Samuel 2:11-17, 22-25, 3:1-21

As soon as he was old enough to leave his parents, Samuel went to live at God's temple in Shiloh, with the priest, Eli..

Eli's sons were also priests, but they helped themselves to what people had brought to give to God.



Eli talked to them about it. They ignored him.



But Samuel did all the work he was given well.

One night, after everyone had gone to bed, Samuel heard someone calling him.



He thought it was Eli, so he ran to him.



No, I didn't call you

It happened again.



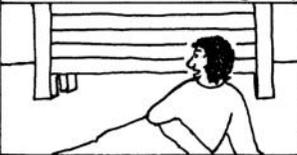
I didn't call. Go back to bed.

The third time, Eli knew it must be God calling Samuel.



You must say, 'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening.'

God called Samuel again,



and Samuel answered as he had been told.

I told Eli his sons had done bad things, but he has not stopped them. Now, even being sorry will not make up for what has happened.



The next morning, Eli demanded to be told what God had said.



Samuel was afraid, but he told him.

He is God. He will deal with us as is right.



God continued to talk to Samuel. He became known throughout Israel.



## 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'.

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

## What about the gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh?

The story of the coming of the Magi grew in the telling. By the 6th century they had acquired names: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. By medieval times they were considered to be kings. Whoever they were,

we do know from Matthew that they brought three gifts to Jesus.

What about their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh? While we cannot know for sure what was in the minds of first century Magi, one Victorian scholar has offered a possible explanation as to the significance of their gifts. He was the Rev John Henry Hopkins, an American Episcopalian minister, who in 1857 wrote his much-loved Christmas carol, 'We Three Kings of Orient Are'.

Gold, said John Henry Hopkins, was a gift that would have been given to a king. Frankincense had traditionally been brought by priests as they worshipped God in the Temple. Myrrh was a spice that the ancients used in preparing bodies for burial.

If that is true, then you could say that the Wise Men, in choosing their gifts for this infant, honoured Jesus with gold because He was King of the Jews, with frankincense because He was to be worshipped as divine, and with myrrh, because He would also become a sacrifice and die for His people.

The Wise Men were the very first gentiles ever to worship Jesus. What faith they had! They travelled for months over difficult terrain, they never saw any evidence of Jesus' kingship, His divinity or His sacrificial death. They worshipped Him through faith in God's promises about Him. Isaiah foresaw this response to Jesus: 'Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.' The Magi's eyes of faith saw clearly and far into the future.

Compare that with the High Priest and religious leaders whom the Wise Men saw in Jerusalem when they first arrived. These head priests knew all about the prophecies of their own coming Messiah, but NOT ONE Jewish religious leader travelled to look for Him in Bethlehem. And it is only six miles down the road!

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

## **The Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas)**

In bygone centuries, Christians said their last farewells to the Christmas season on Candlemas, 2nd February. This is exactly 40 days after Christmas Day itself.

In New Testament times 40 days old was an important age for a baby boy: it was when they made their first 'public appearance'. Mary, like all good Jewish mothers, went to the Temple with Jesus, her first male child – to 'present Him to the Lord'. At the same time, she, as a new

mother, was ‘purified’. Thus, we have the Festival of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple.

So, where does the Candlemas bit come in? Jesus is described in the New Testament as the Light of the World, and early Christians developed the tradition of lighting many candles in celebration of this day. The Church also fell into the custom of blessing the year’s supply of candles for the church on this day – hence the name, Candlemas.

The story of how Candlemas began can be found in Luke 2:22-40. Simeon’s great declaration of faith and recognition of who Jesus was is of course found in the Nunc Dimittis, which is embedded in the Office of Evening Prayer in the West. But in medieval times, the Nunc Dimittis was mostly used just on this day, during the distribution of candles before the Eucharist. Only gradually did it win a place in the daily prayer life of the Church.

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

## **14th February – Valentine’s Day mystery**

There are two confusing things about this day of romance and anonymous love-cards strewn with lace, cupids and ribbon: firstly, there seems to have been two different Valentines in the 4th century – one a priest martyred on the Flaminian Way, under the emperor Claudius, the other a bishop of Terni martyred at Rome. And neither seems to have had any clear connection with lovers or courting couples.

So why has Valentine become the patron saint of romantic love? By Chaucer’s time the link was assumed to be because on these saints’ day -14<sup>th</sup> February – the birds are supposed to pair. Or perhaps the custom of seeking a partner on St Valentine’s Day is a surviving scrap of the old Roman Lupercalia festival, which took place in the middle of February. One of the Roman gods honoured during this Festival was Pan, the god of nature. Another was Juno, the goddess of women and marriage. During the Lupercalia it was a popular custom for young men to draw the name of a young unmarried woman from a name-box. The two would then be partners or ‘sweethearts’ during the time of the celebrations. Even modern Valentine decorations bear an ancient symbol of love – Roman cupids with their bows and love-arrows.

There are no churches in England dedicated to Valentine, but since 1835 his relics have been claimed by the Carmelite church in Dublin.

## Notices!

### 100 Club Winners!

#### *December 2025*

Date	No:	Winner	Church
7th	1	Fr Gary	
14th	7	Audrey Powell	St. Margaret's
21st	9	Janice Rosser	St. Margaret's
28th	58	Lorna Hunt	St. Margaret's

## Services and Holy Days

*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>
<i>1st Feb</i>	THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY
<i>2nd Feb</i>	THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE Candlemas
<i>8th Feb</i>	THE SECOND SUNDAY before LENT: CREATION SUNDAY
<i>15th Feb</i>	THE SUNDAY before LENT: TRANSFIGURATION SUNDAY
<i>18th Feb</i>	ASH WEDNESDAY
<i>22nd Feb</i>	THE FIRST SUNDAY of LENT

Below is a list detailing the dates, time and locations for the Welsh Eucharist services, for the coming year (2026).



ARDAL WEINIDOGAETH  
TAF RHYMNEY  
TAFF RHYMNEY  
MINISTRY AREA

## Y Cymun Bendigaid Holy Eucharist

31st	Ionawr/January	S. Catwg's Church, Gelligaer
7th	Mawrth/March	S. Matthias' Church, Treharris
11th	Ebrill/April	S. Gwladys's Church, Bargoed
2nd	Mai/May	Holy Trinity, Ystrad Mynach
6th	Mehefin/June	S. Margaret's Church, Gilfach
4th	Gorffennaf/July	Llanfabon, Nelson
	Awst/August	Dim Gwasanaeth / No Service
5th	Medi/September	S. Catwg's Church, Gelligaer
3rd	Hydref/October	S. Tyfaelog's Church, Pontlottyn
7th	Tachwedd/November	S. John's Church, Nelson
5th	Rhagfyr/December	TBA

### **DYDD SADWRN 11.00AM SATURDAY**

yn Gymraeg – in Welsh

gyda te, coffi ac amser i gymdeithasu / with tea, coffee and fellowship

Croeso cynnes i bawb / A warm welcome to everyone!

## 100 Club

Once again 2025 was a very successful year. The amounts raised and prizes paid out will be published in Marche's Magazine.

If anyone wishing to join our 100 club there are spare numbers available, please contact Cheryl/Linda in St Catwg's or Jeanette/Enid in St. Margaret's.

Thanks to all of our members.

**Jenn**



# God in the Arts

*Editor: Have you ever thought how an actual church building might provide a series of visual aids to spiritual meditation? This month the Revd Michael Burgess considers the font. (There is a photograph to go with this article, showing St George's Church, Anstey, in Hertfordshire).*

## ‘He gave us eyes to see them’ - The Church Font

Last month we stood at the doorway of a church in West Yorkshire. Open the door of that church or any church and the first thing to greet our eyes is the font. It marks the beginning of Christian life in the church. Many fonts have fine carvings of the seven sacraments that nourish the Christian. Others are octagonal in shape: a reminder of Noah and his seven family members saved in the ark from the Flood.



This month's font is a symbol of the ship sailing the seas of life. It is in St George's Church, Anstey, in Hertfordshire. Around the font are carved mermen - mythical, pagan creatures that belong to a pre-Christian age which the newly baptised is called on to renounce. When it was carved in the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries, baptism occurred within eight days of birth. Babies would be immersed three times into the waters of the font: dying to the old life symbolised by the mermen, and rising to new life, to be clothed in a white robe and given a lighted candle as a guide through life. They would then grow up in the church, moving from that west end through the upturned boat of the nave to the altar at the east end.

That movement is a sign of the pilgrimage we are all called to make. Like a journey on the seas of this world, we may sail through tranquil waters and peaceful days. There may be times when the skies are cloudy and the waters stormy. Martin Luther, when he was faced by struggles like that in his life, would say the words 'I am baptised' to strengthen and reassure himself. 'I am baptised' we can say as we travel in faith, knowing that there is always a light to guide and a goal that is sure and eternal.

*Credit: 'The famous mermen font at St George's Church, Anstey, by Michael Garlick, via Wikimedia Commons'*

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

# 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.*

## Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Every person who ever lived was once a sperm and an egg. Those two cells fused together, and in nine months they turned into a living, breathing, human being. Each of us emerged from this same embryonic development process, which is highly complex and organised, but variable enough to turn out a unique individual every time.

If you like order – such as neat piles of stationery, or tidy colour-coded files – you will enjoy this story. One of the most important stages of an embryo’s development is when each section of the body, from head to rump, takes on its identity. Each part is told what shape to take, and which limbs or internal organs to grow: legs or arms, lungs or kidneys, and so on.

The most beautiful part of this body-patterning process is that it brings the dimensions of time and space together in such a neat way. The DNA instructions for the procedure, known as genes, are organised in the order in which they are needed during development *which is also* the order in which they appear on the body. No other sets of genes are known to be arranged in such a tidy pattern.

So, as the embryo develops, the tissues near the head end activate the first sets of genes. Those active genes then make all the proteins needed for that part of the body to grow and develop in the right way. The tissues just below the head then switch on the second set of genes, and so on. A wave of activation passes down the embryo, specifying each section of the trunk in turn.

The Wisconsin-based developmental biologist Jeff Hardin often quotes Psalm 139 to express the wonder of embryonic development. The Psalmist did not understand how this process happened, but he knew that it was a marvellous thing. *“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb...your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 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.”*

The story of the tidy genes brings out the hidden beauty in the very

early stages of embryonic development. The more biologists get to find out about how we came to be born, the more we can say, “*I am fearfully and wonderfully made*”!

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

## **Conversion of St Paul**

January is a month of the beginning of great things! As well as the naming of the Son of God, we celebrate the conversion of the greatest ever apostle of the Christian faith. Many books have been written on Paul, and here is the briefest of introductions.

He was a Jew, born as ‘Saul’ at Tarsus, and brought up by the rabbi Gamaliel as a Pharisee. A devout, fanatical Jew, Saul persecuted the Christians, and watched with satisfaction the first Christian martyrdom, the stoning of Stephen. Then, on his way to Damascus, Saul had a vision of Christ that stopped him in his tracks. He realised that this Jesus whom he was persecuting was in fact the Messiah for whom he had longed.

Saul changed overnight. He was given a new name, Paul, and became an evangelist for the cause of Christ. He became a leader in the early Church, and his special calling was as an apostle to the Gentiles. He wrote epistles to the young churches that he founded - and thus, inadvertently, wrote a great part of the New Testament.

Life as the greatest apostle was hardly full of perks: Paul was stoned, beaten, mobbed, homeless, hated, imprisoned, and finally martyred. Tradition has it that he was beheaded in Rome during the persecution of Nero in 64AD, and buried where the basilica of St Paul ‘outside the walls’ now stands. His mighty faith in Christ has kindled similar belief in many hundreds of millions of people down the centuries.

### **Light**

A fellow nurse at my hospital received a call from an anxious woman. “I’m diabetic and I’m afraid I’ve had too much sugar today,” she said. “Are you light-headed?” my colleague asked. “Oh no,” the caller answered, “I’m a brunette.

### **March’s Magazine 2026**

Please can you forward any news, articles etc, to me by Monday 23rd February, for inclusion in the March’s edition.

**Many Thanks Chris** (email: [chriscorbin1961@gmail.com](mailto:chriscorbin1961@gmail.com))

## Friends of Gilfach

We held a general meeting on the first Tuesday in January, which would have been our Annual General Meeting for Mothers' Union. It has been a tumultuous year leaving Mothers' Union and forming Friends of Gilfach, but it is all working well. It wasn't an easy decision and not hastily made and appreciate how difficult it was for members who had been part of Mothers' Union for so many years.

At the meeting it was discussed what we would do with the money raised last year and as promised we will give £200 to the caravan, which was always a favourite for us. We will also give £250 to the church for our heating and lighting. We are supporting Heolddu school with products for the hygiene section which always needs products to help pupils. We will be donating £300 worth of products which we will buy locally in order to support our local shops also.

Hilda gave us £500 donated to the flower arrangement team, which we are very grateful for and will use next year for whatever scheme needs our help. We are hoping to have a talk from someone in Llamau regarding how we can help them, as we did when there was a women's refuge in Gilfach. They always need toiletry products for when the women (and sometimes men) flee an abusive home. We are also open to any suggestions for help in other places.

We continue with our monthly meetings, coffee mornings and quiz afternoons and anybody is welcome. We look forward to seeing new people join in our community, and thank everyone for their continued support.

**God Bless**

**Kath**

## Ash Wednesday:



A good time to admit you are sorry

Have you done something which haunts you? Which makes you feel restless and defensive, every time you think of it? Why not deal with it this month, and put it behind you? Whatever your mistake has been, consider what the Bible has to say to you:

‘I have not come to call the virtuous but sinners to repentance’ (said Jesus). (Luke 5.32)

‘Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. (Isaiah 55.7)

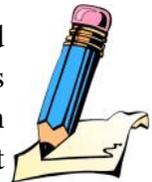
‘Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the Lord, your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing.’ (Joel 2:12-13)

God is inviting you to come to Him this Ash Wednesday. What a wonderful offer! Make the most of it and remember how the prodigal son was welcomed back by his compassionate father.

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

## .Getting Involved during 2026

During 2026 we would like to develop our Churches and Community section of the magazine by inviting our readers to contribute towards our monthly magazines. Information about events, your thoughts and reflections or any relevant news are all welcome.



If you feel you have something to offer and would like to contribute, please can you forward the information to myself via email (email: [chriscorbin1961@gmail.com](mailto:chriscorbin1961@gmail.com)) or pass a hand written copy to Carolyn by the third week of the month for inclusion in the following month’s edition.

Many Thanks.

## Sudoku Challenge

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

© 2014 KrazyDad.com

*Solution can be found on page 39*

## Quotes for 2026

Peace is to the soul what health is to the body: a sign of balance and order. – **Guy Appere**

You are today where your thoughts have brought you; you will be tomorrow where your thoughts take you. – **James Allen**

Obedience is the key that unlocks the door to every profound spiritual experience. – **Dorothy Kerin**

The noblest revenge is to forgive. – **Thomas Fuller**

Hope means expectancy when things are otherwise hopeless. – **G K Chesterton**



### 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>

## Praying with the Prayers of the Bible.



In this series we will be looking at 12 prayers found in the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments. Some are prayers for personal circumstances, while others relate to family or church or nation. In studying all 12 prayers the emphasis will be on what we can learn about prayer and how we can be encouraged to pray

more regularly, more fervently and more expectantly.

Praying about the Unknown Future: *“O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?”* Genesis 15:2-3.

This is the Bible’s first prayer. That doesn’t mean that no one before Abraham had prayed, but this is the first time we have a record of someone praying to God.

We learn as early as Genesis 4 that “men began to call on the name of the Lord” (v.26) but it does not explicitly say that they prayed. We can hardly believe that godly men like Enoch and Noah never prayed. Enoch ‘walked with God’ and in his long pilgrimage of three hundred years of fellowship with God (Gen. 5:22) he must have prayed many times.

Even before Abraham’s first prayer is mentioned we are told that God appeared to him, that he built an altar for sacrifice and worship and that he called on the name of the Lord (Gen. 12;7; 13:18). But now he faces a real crisis in his life.

When God first appeared to him, he had been promised that from his family a great nation would emerge (Gen. 12:1-3). Now many years later he still has no children and custom dictates that his chief servant, Eliezer, will inherit everything. Has God forgotten him? Were all those promises of being a father just make believe or self-delusion?

So he cried to God, “What will you give me?” It was a desperate prayer from a desperate heart. What was God doing? Why had He not kept His promises? Had He forgotten? Was He not able to do what He had promised? We have all been where Abraham was when he prayed that prayer. We want to believe but why is nothing happening?

Then God answered! “Your own son shall be your heir” (v.4). This wonderful answer was sealed with a dramatic illustration. God directed Abraham to look up into the night sky. “Number the stars if you can,” God said. “So shall your descendants be.” Abraham would one day have as many offspring as the stars in the sky! Impossible? Incredible? Far-fetched?

But it happened! The next chapter records the birth of his son Ishmael, and two chapters later we read of the birth of Isaac, the son of promise. And history, both biblical and secular, confirms that the illustration from the stars was no exaggeration!

So, the Bible's first prayer helps us in several ways. First, when our hearts ache because of fear or doubt or uncertainty, take it to God in prayer. Second, God's delays are not denials. Third, with Abraham who 'believed the Lord' (v.6), let us trust quietly in our sovereign and gracious God.

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

*Canon Paul Hardingham continues his series on the books of the Bible, which will run until the end of 2025.*

## **What's the Big Idea? - An Introduction to the Old Testament: Isaiah**

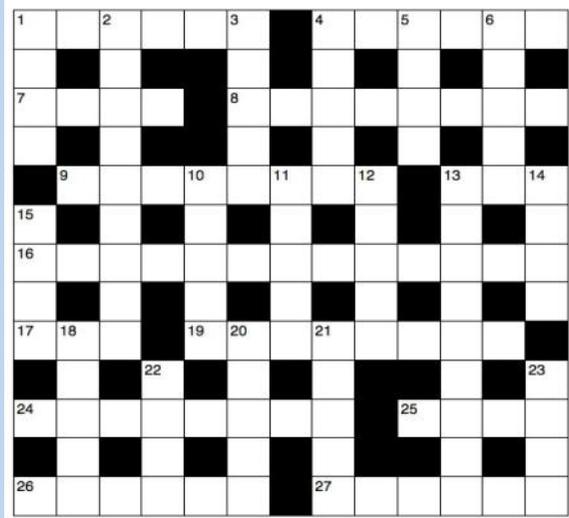
Isaiah is often regarded as the greatest of the prophets. His name means 'The Lord saves' and he began his 50-year ministry in 740 BC when King Uzziah died (6:1). Many scholars challenge the claim that Isaiah wrote the entire book, however there are striking verbal parallels between chapters 1–39 and 40–66.

Isaiah spoke during the stormy period marking the expansion of the Assyrian empire and the decline of Israel. The Assyrians destroyed the northern kingdom in 721. Judah was left to decide whether they would make alliances with other kingdoms or rely on God to protect them. Isaiah warns Judah that her sin would bring captivity in Babylon, which eventually took place in 586.

Isaiah sees the Messiah coming from the line of David. He speaks of a new temple being established (ch2); a child born with a new kingdom (ch9) and judging differently to other kings (ch11) as well as the nature of His suffering (ch53). The 'suffering servant' (chapters 42–53) also applies to Israel as a nation, who are called to be a 'light for the Gentiles' (42:6). Not surprisingly Jesus applies Isaiah's words to His own life and ministry. eg Is 61:1 quoted in Luke 4:18. Throughout his book Isaiah presents the full dimensions of God's judgment and salvation as 'the Holy One of Israel' (6:1), as well as the 'Sovereign Lord' far above all nations (40:15–24).

Isaiah looks forward to the promise of a new city of Zion (chs 60–66), in which the people offer praise to the Holy One of Israel. 'Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. 'The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.' (65:17).

# February's Crossword



# Challenge

## Across

- 1 'If you love those who love you, what — is that to you?' (Luke 6:32) (6)
- 4 'They threw the ship's — overboard' (Acts 27:19) (6)
- 7 The first murderer (Genesis 4:8) (4)
- 8 He was the head Levite in charge of the singing when the ark of God was brought back to Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 15:22) (8)
- 9 Samson was noted for this (Judges 16:6) (8)
- 13 Solicit money or food from passers by (Acts 3:2) (3)
- 16 What William Booth's Christian Mission became in 1878 (9,4)
- 17 Alliance of Religions and Conservation (1,1,1)
- 19 'I will praise your name for ever and ever. — — I will praise you' (Psalm 145:1-2) (5,3)
- 24 Simon had (anag.) (8)
- 25 Desperate (Deuteronomy 28:48) (4)
- 26 Elisha witnessed the boy he was seeking to resuscitate do this seven times before opening his eyes (2 Kings 4:35) (6)
- 27 The belly and thighs of the statue in Nebuchadnezzar's dream were made of this (Daniel 2:32) (6)

## Down

- 1 'Before the — crows, you will disown me three times' (Matthew 26:75) (4)
- 2 Relating to the books of the Bible between Acts and Revelation (9)

- 3 'They have — the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!' (John 20:2) (5)
- 4 Belief (5)
- 5 'Take the following fine spices: ... 250 shekels of fragrant — ' (Exodus 30:23) (4)
- 6 'Do not — Jerusalem, but wait for the gift' (Acts 1:4) (5)
- 10 A seer (anag.) (5)
- 11 'Even there your hand will — me' (Psalm 139:10) (5)
- 12 The wild variety was part of John the Baptist's diet (Mark 1:6) (5)
- 13 A non-Greek speaker who was looked down on by civilized people (Colossians 3:11) (9)
- 14 Famous 1950s musical whose characters included members of Across, — and Dolls (4)
- 15 The province from which Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 16:19) (4)
- 18 'He was standing in the gateway with a linen cord and a measuring — — his hand' (Ezekiel 40:3) (3,2)
- 20 'Today, if you hear his — , do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion' (Hebrews 3:15) (5)
- 21 The Jericho prostitute who hid two Israelite spies on the roof of her house (Hebrews 11:31) (5)
- 22 'And now these three remain: faith, — and love. But the greatest of these is love' (1 Corinthians 13:13) (4)
- 23 'God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end' (Daniel 5:26) (4)

***Crossword solution - Page 39***

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

**Windows**

A wife texted her husband on a cold winter morning: "Windows frozen."

Her husband texted back: "Pour some lukewarm water over it."

The wife texted back five minutes later: "Computer's completely not working now."

## Book Reviews

### **The Sacraments: Responding to God's Loving Invitation**

York Courses, By Jane Williams, SPCK, £14.99



This lively course on the sacraments by Jane Williams, one of the founders of St Mellitus College, is widely accessible, like all York Courses.

The course book contains the transcript of the accompanying audio/video, in which Jane is joined by a number of guests from various backgrounds, as they discuss the themes of The Sacraments.

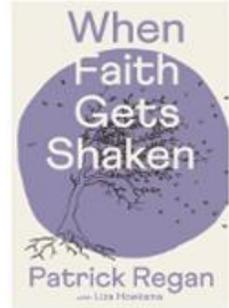
-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-0-

### **When Faith Gets Shaken: 3rd Edition**

By Patrick Regan, SPCK, £10.99

What do you do when life falls apart and it feels as if God has left you? How do you keep going when your faith is rocked to the core?

Sometimes things get so hard we're not sure where God is - or what He's up to. Patrick was facing pain, illness and loss in his family and community; then a series of excruciating operations took him to the brink - physically, emotionally and spiritually.



Writing during his journey of recovery, Patrick reflects on the true nature of courage as he explores:

- how we find God in times of suffering
- how we can know God's peace when life is anything but peaceful
- how we allow ourselves the grace to rest when we're running on empty
- how we can stay fully present in the moment.

In doing so, he heartens and encourages us to grasp the love of God at an ever-deeper level.

# 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 Readers Rota

### February 2026

### March 2026

### April 2026

1st	Paul Thomas	1st	Paul Thomas	5th	Janeve Manca
8th	Cheryl Pugh	8th	Cheryl Pugh	12th	Christine Harvey
15th	Janeve Manca	15th	Janeve Manca	19th	Pat Davies
22nd	Pat Davies	22nd	Christine Harvey	26th	Paul Thomas
		29th	Pat Davies		

## St. Margaret's Readers Rota

### February 2026

### March 2026

### April 2026

1st	Kath Llewellyn	1st	June Phillips	5th	Kath Llewellyn
8th	Enid Mayne	8th	Linda Bartlett	12th	Alex Ball
15th	Jenn East	15th	Lynne Thomas	19th	Christine Thorpe
22nd	Jennette Jones	22nd	Neil Hazell	26th	Chris Ball
		29th	Mark Jones		

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

## St. Margaret's Cleaning Rota

### February 2026

### March 2026

### April 2026

1	Lynda Bartlett	Sue	1	Lynda Bartlett	Sue	5	Jennette	Audrey
8	Lynda Trollope	Enid	8	Lynda Trollope	Enid	12	Kath	June
15	Jennette	Audrey	15	Jennette	Audrey	19	Lynda Bartlett	Sue
22	Kath	June	22	Kath	June	26	Lynda Trollope	Enid
			29	Lynda Trollope	Enid			

# From the Register

## Christian Funerals

***December 202***

3<sup>rd</sup>

*Pamela Greenaway RIP*

4<sup>th</sup>

*Beverley Horrell RIP*

5<sup>th</sup>

*Linda Matthews RIP*

8<sup>th</sup>

*Daisy Cook RIP*

19<sup>th</sup>

*Gareth Jones RIP*

***January 2026***

15<sup>th</sup>

*Vera Pipe RIP*

21<sup>st</sup>

*Fay Payne RIP*

23<sup>rd</sup>

*Bernice Bampfield RIP*

28<sup>th</sup>

*Jennifer Lynne Evans 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**

-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.***

-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.***

# For the Younger Generation.

## The Big Bash!



JESUS OFTEN TOLD STORIES WITH HIDDEN MEANINGS



ONE STORY WAS ABOUT A RICH MAN WHO DECIDED TO HAVE A PARTY



HE SENT OUT LOTS OF INVITATIONS



OH!  
NO!!

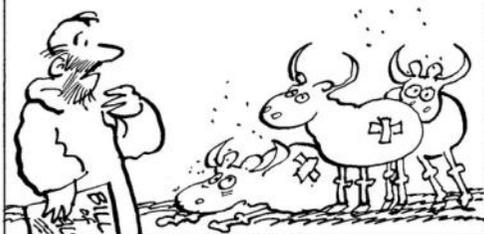


BUT PEOPLE STARTED MAKING EXCUSES

ONE MAN SAID HE HAD BOUGHT A FIELD, BUT NEEDED TO MEASURE IT



ANOTHER MAN SAID HE NEEDED TO TEST DRIVE THE OXEN HE HAS JUST PAID FOR



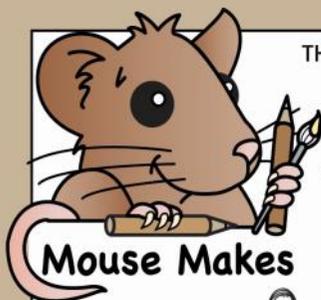
ANOTHER MAN SAID HE HAD JUST GOT MARRIED - AND HIS WIFE WOULDN'T LET HIM OUT!

SO THE RICH MAN INVITED ALL THE POOR AND NEEDY INSTEAD.



YES - I CAN COME TO YOUR PARTY

THE PARABLE MEANS WE SHOULDN'T MAKE EXCUSES FOR NOT FOLLOWING JESUS.



## Mouse Makes

Read the story in  
Luke 4:1-13



## SECOND TEMPTATION

THE  
DEVIL SAID:

"I will give you power  
and wealth if you worship me."

JESUS REPLIED:

"Worship the Lord your God  
and serve only Him."

Read Deuteronomy 6:13

WE LEARN:

Put God **first**  
Worship *only* Him.



## THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

After Jesus was  
baptised in the River  
Jordan where did the  
Holy Spirit lead him to? v1

How many days was  
Jesus being tempted  
by the devil? v2

What did Jesus eat? v2

What did the devil tempt  
Jesus to turn a stone into?  
What did Jesus say? v3-4

What did the devil offer  
Jesus if He worshipped him?  
What did Jesus say? v7-8

What did the  
devil ask  
Jesus to do?  
What did  
Jesus say? v9



## FIRST TEMPTATION

THE  
DEVIL SAID:

"If you are God's Son order  
this stone to turn into bread."

JESUS REPLIED:

"Man shall not live on  
bread alone."

Read Deuteronomy 8:3

WE LEARN:  
Read the Bible  
Learn God's word.



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



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

JESUS • BAPTISED • RIVER • JORDAN • HOLY SPIRIT • LED  
WILDERNESS • DESERT • FORTY DAYS • HUNGRY • DEVIL  
TEMPTATION • STONE • BREAD • WRITTEN • SON • WORLD  
KINGDOMS • GLORY • WORSHIP • SERVE • GOD • HIGH

JERUSALEM • TEMPLE • SON • JUMP • DOWN • LIFT • FOOT • LORD • TEST • LENT



## THIRD TEMPTATION

THE  
DEVIL SAID:

"If you are God's Son throw  
yourself down, the scriptures  
say God will take care of you."

JESUS REPLIED:

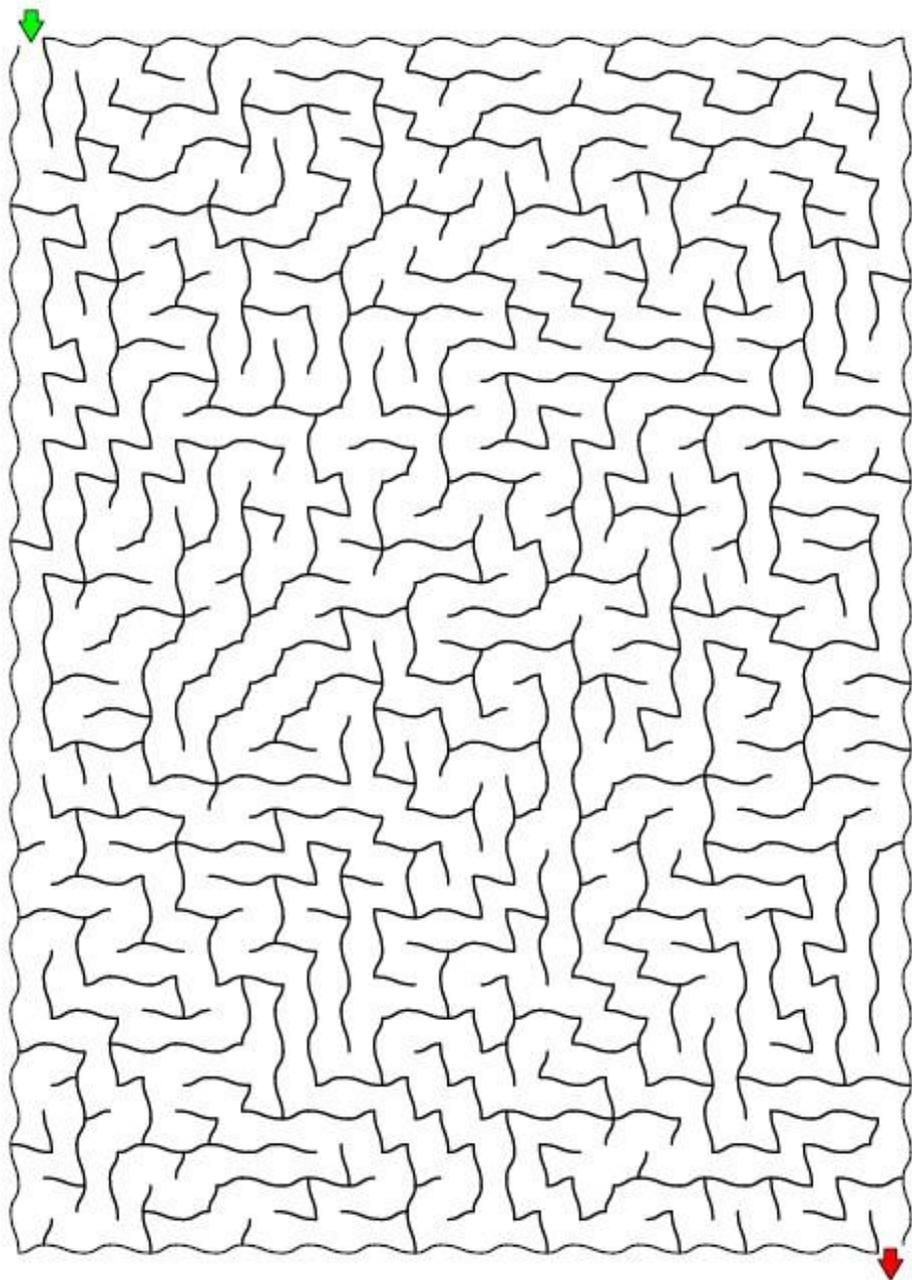
"Do not put the Lord  
your God to the test."

Read Deuteronomy 6:16

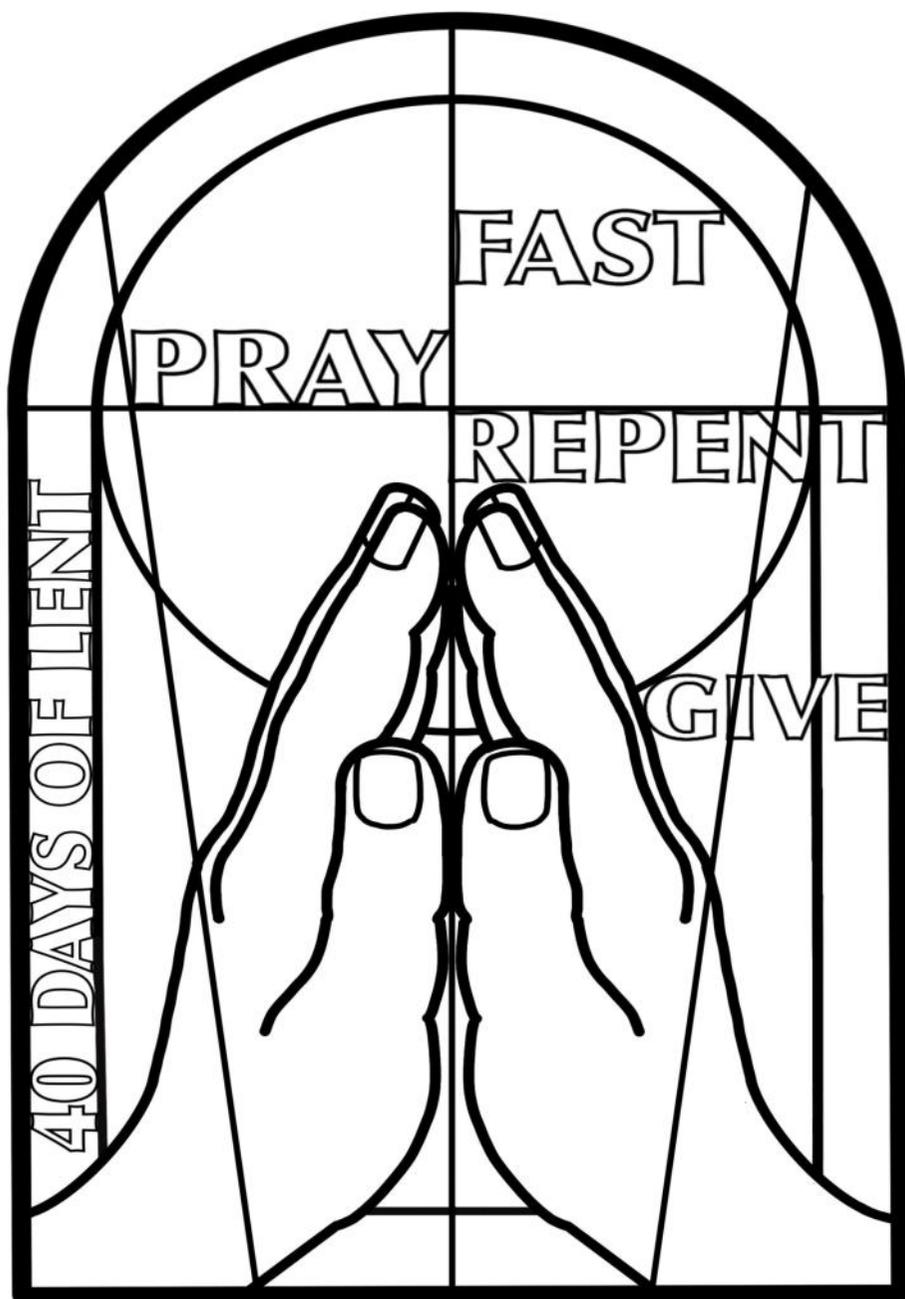
WE LEARN:  
God cares, **trust**  
Him do not test Him.



Complete the maze!



Colour in!



## 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.*

## Morgan Thomas

### Quality Butcher

*Prime meat from our own farms, fresh fruit and vegetables, fresh bread and milk daily.*

**2, The Square Penpedairheol.**

**01443 830492**



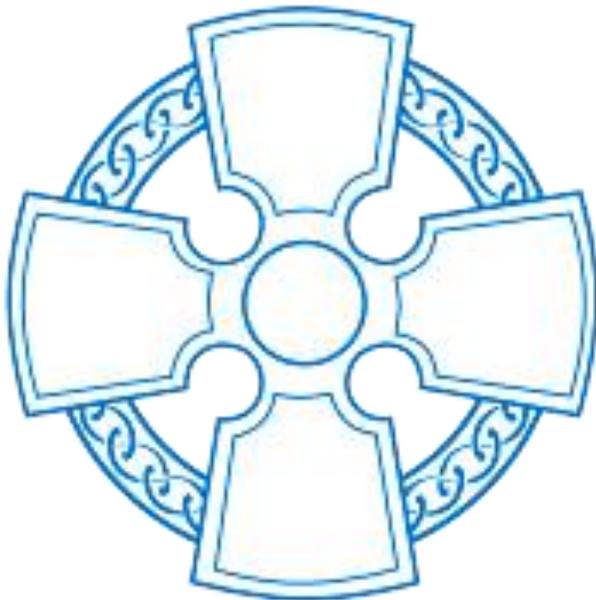
**Local Deliveries**



*This Publication was produced and printed by the Taff Rhymney Ministry Area,  
District of Gelligaer. 2026*



ARDAL WEINIDOGAETH  
TÂF RHYMNI  
TAFF RHYMNEY  
MINISTRY AREA



*'Taff Rhymney Ministry Area, registered as charitable incorporated organisation in England  
& Wales. Registered Charity No. 1208522*

*Principal Office: The Vicarage, Cedar Way, Ystrad Mynach, CF82 7DR.'*