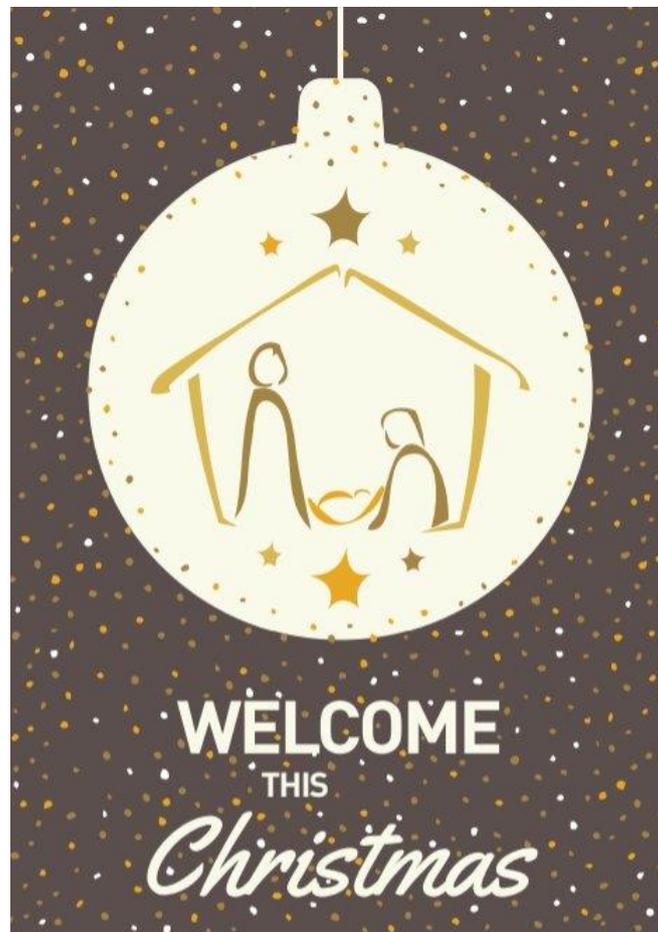


***The Magazine of
The Swansea Pastorate of
The United Reformed Church
Christ Well, Manselton/
Temple, Gowerton***



December 2019/January 2020

The Coming Change

Living Lord,
as we light the Advent candles,
as we decorate the Church,
as we sing our Advent hymns,
we long for Your coming.

‘Come , Lord. Come Prince of Peace.’

We say; we sing; we hope.

Come, bring transformation to our broken places and our broken hearts.

We long for swords to be turned into plough shares,
fighter jets to be turned into tractors,
piles of rubble remade into warm and welcoming homes.

We long for hearts that are full of hurt, grief or emptiness to be transformed by the light of Your love and Your presence.

We long for hope to dawn within us.

We pray for your coming, Lord with the promise of peace.

Living Lord, give us courage to journey towards you.

Help us to let go of the fears and prejudices that keep us stuck, afraid to take that step toward the peace of Your holy place.

Help us to open ourselves to Your presence, encouraging us to work for the peace, justice and love for which we long each day.

Fill us with Your Spirit so that we can be among those who create a community of wholeness, peace and Shalom.

We hear Your invitation, Lord. We come.

Minister's Letter

December 2019

Dear friends,

I have already mentioned this to a number of people, but there is a genuine danger that I am in for a 'Vicar of Dibley' experience in the run-up to Christmas! I am not quite sure how it has happened, but my diary tells me that I will be eating a festive lunch at one particular local establishment – The K***** - on Thursday 5th, Friday 6th and Monday 9th December. Thank goodness for the weekend – and thank goodness that it is not three meals on one day! I suspect that these arrangements say a lot about the quality of the food and the experience at this establishment; I am not quite sure what the bar staff and the waiting staff will think of me when I turn up on the Monday... I have tried to make my menu choices as varied as possible!

Quite properly, there are many ways in which we try to avoid what might be termed 'excess' at Christmas... excessive food, drink, spending, partying and more. The time of year is not renowned for what might be termed 'restraint' and we are aware of the fact that all manner of things conspire to diminish or blot out completely what we might call the true 'voice' of Christmas. Of course, we should enjoy ourselves, spend time with our families and delight in giving and receiving gifts – as people of faith, we are used to the 'tensions' of trying to hold together effectively what might be termed the worldly and the spiritual.

As I try to examine the Christmas stories from God's perspective, however, I find that the word 'excess' crops up

again...this time, with very different connotations. What happened – and what continues to happen – is staggering. God’s love is excessive, God’s generosity is unconditional, God’s commitment in enduring, God’s interest in all that he created and sustained is deeply personal and beyond question. Properly, Christmas is the backdrop for many community events and many corporate acts of Cristian worship. This year, however, I am trying to focus on the *personal* message and meaning of Christmas: what should it, does it mean for *me*? More than once, I have returned to the idea that Christmas is a further demonstration of God’s excessive love – love which knows no limits.

Wishing you all a peaceful and meaningful Christmas and New Year.

With much love in Christ,

Neil

Advent Study Group

As in the last few years, there will be an Advent Study group at the manse on Monday evenings in December. All are very welcome. We will meet from 7.30pm – 9.00pm on 2nd, 9th and 16th December. This year we will be using some study material produced by Vision4Life under the general heading of, ‘The story we all know’. So, familiar passages, fresh perspectives. Make this a part of your preparation for Christmas and beyond this year.

Day of Prayer

Christ Well's Day of Prayer for Advent will take place in the Quiet Room between 10am and 6pm on Monday 2nd December. A booklet will be available to help you 'focus' your prayers. This year, rather than signing up for a particular 30-minute slot, feel free to come and go as you please. The building will be open as normal between 10am and 12 noon and I – Neil – will work on the premises between 12 noon and 6pm to ensure that folk have access to the Prayer Room. If I find that I can't manage the whole of the 5 hours, I will make sure that somebody else is around!

Pre-Christmas Walk

This will take place on the afternoon of Saturday 7th December...local, but well away from lights and shops! Please listen for details on the previous Sunday or have a word with Neil during the preceding week – the exact nature of the walk will be dependent on weather, since one option is relatively exposed! Given the time at which it will get dark, the walk is likely to be from 11.00 am – 12.30pm.

Week of prayer for Christian Unity 2020

There will be an agape during the WPCU again; in recent years, this has been a significant event which has brought Christians together in Manselton. This time, the meal/worship will be hosted by St. Michael's; full details will follow in a few weeks, but as those who will be attending this, we are on standby to bring deserts/cheese to the event. Take note and put the date in your diary – Friday, 24th Jan.

Conversations in the sauna

There are some conversations where it is best to say very little...because it centres on something about which you know very little! Three of us were in the sauna, all about the same age – and one guy said that he recognised the other guy (not me!); it transpired that they had both been sportsmen of some note in Wales and beyond. One had been a cricketer and continued to play and coach; the other had been an amateur boxer who had achieved success at international level. Now, I do not follow sport and didn't recognise either of the other people...and soon felt way out of my depth when the conversation turned to all manner of issues relating to sport – both amateur and professional – in 2019; I asked what I hoped was a reasonably intelligent question about women in boxing and, effectively, kept quiet.

Jesus acknowledged the power of human language – the things that come 'from within' have the potential to do both great good and great damage. He also commended integrity in the way that we talk – our 'yes' should mean 'yes' and our 'no' should mean 'no'. Yes, we know that there are times for speaking up and speaking out... but there are also times for keeping quiet, particularly if we need to listen to others talking about a matter of faith about which we know very little – we are not experts on every matter relating to Christianity. Equally, there are times for quiet, when we know or suspect that our words would not build up other people.

The Sunday School Union Invites everyone to their Carol Service on Friday 6th December at 6.45pm at Gorse Mission. A warm welcome awaits you.

Wednesday - 5th February. 10.30am. Prayer and Communion Service at Salim, Landore.

Synod Meeting Llandrindod Wells, 19th October 2019

We set off early on the morning of 19th October heading for the Synod meeting at Llandrindod Wells. We arrived in time for coffee and biscuits before proceedings started at 11am. Simon Walkling, the Moderator welcomed everyone, there were approximately 90 attendees from all over Wales. There followed a short act of worship led by members of the Brecon Pastorate. Different pastorates will be invited to lead worship at all future meetings.

Simon introduced our Time for God Volunteer and she said a little about herself, where she came from and her work. She did very well and had a warm reception and we were very proud of her.

Throughout the day various business discussions took place on such subjects as General Assembly, Ministers Pensions, Accounts and various Funds and Budgets. These were interspersed with short talks by Revd Kathryn Price and Revd Branwen Rees and also Local Church Stories.

The Revd Kathryn Price spoke about the Synod's aim to become an "Eco Synod" which requires a number of churches

in the Synod to be working towards, and some to have achieved Eco Church Awards.

The Revd Branwen Rees spoke about her recent visit to Israel and described the challenges facing people in the occupied areas and the impression that foreign visitors have more rights in Palestine than Palestinians. Branwen recommended The Olive Tree Campaign and Embrace the Middle East and she is available to visit churches to share further about her visit.

Developing a Mission Strategy using a SOAR analysis – Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Resources was illustrated by different church stories.

‘Strengths’, Bethesda, Tongwynlais, near Cardiff, where it was realised that there were more coming for coffee on a Tuesday than on Sunday. In response they created a ‘cuppa and conversation church’. People meet around a table sharing their thoughts and communion.

‘Opportunities’, Dan y Graig United Church, Risca, is a Local Ecumenical Partnership consisting of URC, Presbyterian, and Methodist formed. It introduced messy church 2 years ago and is reviewed every 6 months. It has 16 children and young people and recently representatives of the Sunday School have joined the committee, where the opinions of the young people are greatly valued.

‘Aspirations’, St. John’s, Flint with Bagillt, hold many events and activities where it is the aspiration to grow community. This revolves to a great extent around food and drink. The

church aims to be the Well Centre where all can find refreshment for body and soul.

`Resources`, St. John`s, Buckley held a Weekend of Invitation. Everyone in the congregation was asked to invite at least one person, and the weekend was publicised on Facebook and posters. Events and activities included a prayer board, messy church, treasure hunt and church history display. Children helped with the all age café service on Sunday morning. In response to the event an `afternoon tea` service has been started.

All the stories were interesting and provided food for thought for future enterprises.

Closing worship was led by Simon finishing with a song whose words I found quite moving, so I share them with you.

As we go now from this moment, as we leave behind our time together. May we walk with one another, may we help each other on the way. As we go now from this moment, as we go into the future together. May we treasure one another, may we realise how precious we are.

Remembrance Weekend

The weekend saw a display of artwork by Swansea Artist, Jeff Phillips. These works of art took the form of six-foot panels each depicting scenes from WW1. There were twenty panels and they all held a great deal of information.

These Panels took about three years to put together and took at least three coats of medium on each panel. They were

displayed free of charge and there were no restrictions on taking photos.

People who came to the display were amazed at the quality and content of the panels and were very complimentary about them.

The stories of the young men who went off to War from Carmarthen Road and Christ Well URC were mounted in the lounge and provided another chance for people to read them.

Individual Booklets of these stories from both Churches were made and about twenty-five were sold.

Refreshments were also served over the weekend.

None of the above could have happened without the help of all who gave their time. From delivering leaflets and posters, collecting and returning screens, serving in the cafe, setting up on the Friday and taking down on the Sunday afternoon.

There are things that needed to be done that are not mentioned but a HUGE THANK YOU goes to everyone who helped in any way at all with the weekend. Without our Church Family nothing would happen. It is always amazing to see how we all pull together to make a success of any event. £310 was raised for Alabare in Clydach

Cycle of Prayer for Churches in the Swansea Region

Dec 1 st	Uniting Church, Sketty
Dec. 8 th	Christ Well
Dec. 15 th	Hall Street, Llanelli
Dec 22 nd	Hill Chapel
Dec. 29 th	Tabernacle, Mumbles
Jan 5 th	Temple, Gowerton
Jan 12 th	Uniting Church, Sketty
Jan 19 th	Christ Well
Jan 26 th	Hall Street, Llanelli
Feb 2 nd	Hill Chapel

Used postage stamps

A reminder to please save your stamps, particularly at this time of year when you may Christmas cards through the post, but you can also give them to the church at any time of the year. They will be passed on to a Charity. Thank you.

A reminder – Christ Well Church Meeting will be held on Wednesday, 4th December at 7.30 pm.

Items for the next issue of the Magazine should be received by 23rd January, please.

If you wish to send in your contributions by email the Church email address is : www.Christwell@ntlbusiness.com

News from Temple, Gowerton

Members and Friends of Temple are looking forward to their Annual Christmas Lunch in the Kingsbridge on Thursday, 5th December.

Church Christmas Card

Instead of sending cards to each other it has been decided to have a Church Christmas card, which people can donate to. All the amount collected will be given to Ty Hafan.

A COMMUNITY CAROL SERVICE

'THE GREATEST STORY'

will be held in

TEMPLE, GOWERTON

on

SUNDAY, 8TH DECEMBER, AT 3 PM

EVERYONE IS WELCOME

Christmas Services in Manselton/Brynhyfryd

Friday - 20th December – 6-7 pm - Christingle

Christmas Crafts and Family Friendly worship
(followed by Seasonal refreshments)

Please join us – this is not for children only

Tuesday - Christmas Eve - 4pm

Rev Howard Long – Communion - at Eaton Road

Wednesday - Christmas Day Celebration

10.00 am - Rev Neil Riches – at Christ Well



CHRISTIAN AID APPEAL 2019

Women have the power to liberate themselves, their families and others from oppression. Through their God-given gifts, they could transform lives. But poverty, inequality, violence and injustice often denies women the opportunity to do so. For those who are also mothers, life is doubly difficult as they fight to protect and raise their children. This Christmas, Christian Aid is highlighting the transformational change that women around the world, particularly mothers, can achieve if given the chance – even in the most desperate situations. Here are some women's stories.

Afghanistan

Conflict and drought in Afghanistan forced widow Bibi Aisha and her two children to flee their home. She managed to lead them to safety and find shelter through Christian Aid's local partner RAADA who gave the family a tent. Bibi Aisha is still vulnerable as the sole breadwinner in a society badly affected by inequality, discrimination and exploitation. But she is determined that her children will prosper "I want a bright future for my children,' she says, I want them to be educated."

Bangladesh

Many women face discrimination in Bangladesh, especially those from ethnic minorities. This means they often cannot afford medical help in a crisis – like Amena. She planned to have her second baby at home but as she went into labour, she started bleeding profusely. Christian Aid's local partner PEPSEP gave Amena a health voucher so that she could attend hospital immediately and give birth safely.

India

Ranjita was forced into manual scavenging work at just nine years old. She earned just a few rupees and a piece of stale bread in return for hours of degrading work cleaning human excrement by hand: 'They treated us worse than animals.' she recalled.

Manual scavenging is reserved for the lowest caste in India who are known as Dalit. Despite being outlawed, there are still around 1.2 million manual scavengers, of which 95% are women.

Now a mother to her own children, Ranjita was determined to build a better life for them. Through a community self-help group run by our partner ARUN, she learnt about her rights and felt empowered to apply for a government compensation grant. This then helped her start a tailoring business.

Now Ranjita can provide for her family: 'My children and I are happy now I am earning with dignity.'

Christmas Day Collection will be in aid of Christian Aid and envelopes will be available from 15th December.

CHURCH CALENDAR

Date	Christ Well URC	Temple URC
Sun 1 st Dec	1st Sunday in Advent 10.30 am Rev Neil Riches 6.00 pm Rev Neil Riches - Communion	10.30 am – Morning Worship
Mon 2 nd	10.30 am – 6.00 pm Day of Prayer 7.30 -9.00 pm Advent Study Group – The Manse	
Wed 4 th	Church Meeting	
Thur 5 th		Temple Christmas Lunch
Sat 7 th	11.00 – 12.30 pm Christmas Walk	
Sun 8 th	2nd Sunday in Advent 10.30 am Rev Stephen Baker 6.00 pm Rev L Woollacott – Communion at Eaton Road	3.00 pm Community Carol Service followed by refreshments
Mon 9 th	7.30 -9.00 pm Advent Study Group – The Manse	
Thur 12 th		10.30 am Communion and coffee morning
Sun 15 th	3rd Sunday in Advent 10.30 am Rev Neil Riches Communion and Induction of Elders 6.00 pm Rev Neil Riches	10.30 am - Morning Worship

Date	Christ Well URC	Temple URC
Mon 16 th	7.30 -9.00 pm Advent Study Group – The Manse	
Thur 19 th		10.30 am Communion and coffee morning
Fri 20 th	6.00- 7.00 pm Christingle	
Sun 22 nd	4th Sunday in Advent 10.30 am Rev Neil Riches 6.00 pm Candlelit Carol Service & baby Evie's Dedication	10.30 am Morning Worship
Tu 24 th	Christmas Eve 4.00 pm Rev H Long – Communion at Eaton Road Methodist	
Wed 25 th	10.00 am Christmas Day Celebration	
Sun 29 th	10.30 am Mrs Adella Pritchard No Evening Service	10.30 am – Morning Worship
Sun 5 th Jan	10.30 am Rev Dr Robert Pope 6.00 pm Rev Neil Riches – Communion	10.30 am – Morning Worship and Communion
Sun 12 th	10.30 am Rev Neil Riches 6.00 pm Service at Eaton Road	10.30 am – Morning Worship
Sun 19 th	10.30 am Rev Neil Riches – Communion 6.00 pm Rev Neil Riches	10.30 am – Morning Worship
Fri 24 th	7.00 pm Agape Meal at St Michael's Church, Manselton	

Date	Christ Well URC	Temple URC
Sun 26 th	10.30 am Rev Ivor Rees 6.00 pm Service at Eaton Road	10.30 am – Morning Worship
Sun 2 nd Feb	10.30 am Rev Dr Noel Davies 6.00 pm Rev Neil Riches - Communion	10.30 am – Morning Worship

<u>WEEKLY ACTIVITY SCHEDULE FOR CHRIST WELL URC</u>		
MONDAYS		
TIME	ACTIVITY	ROOMS
9.30 am – 11.45 am	Playgroup (term time only)	Hall
7 – 8 pm	Singing for Fun (2nd Monday of the month only)	Worship Area
TUESDAYS		
TIME	ACTIVITY	ROOMS
9.30 am – 11.45 am	Playgroup (term time only)	Hall
11.00 am – 1.00 pm	Café	Concourse
11.00 am – 12 noon	Musical Memories Choir	Worship Area
2 - 4 pm	Health Support Group	Lounge
6.00 pm – 7.00 pm	Tuesday Club (term time only)	Whole building

7.15 pm	Table Tennis (term time only)	Hall
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WEDNESDAYS		
TIME	ACTIVITY	ROOMS
9.30 am – 11.30 am	Carers and Toddlers (term time only)	Hall
11.00 am – 2.00 pm	Time to Meet	Lounge
11.00 am – 1.00 pm	Café	Concourse

THURSDAYS		
TIME	ACTIVITY	ROOMS
9.30 am – 11.45 am	Playgroup (term time only)	Hall
9.30 am – 11.30 am	Welsh Class - University (University term time only)	Lounge
10.00 am – 12 noon	Welsh Café	Concourse

FRIDAYS		
TIME	ACTIVITY	ROOMS
6.00 pm – 7.00 pm	Brownies (term time only)	Hall

Epiphany of the Lord

Lord Jesus, You are the bright Morning Star.
You offer the promise of a new day.

Into the perplexity of the nations seeking peace and
finding war.
You come as the Prince of Peace.

Into the everyday working lives of us all.
Your guiding light shines.

In Your sign, entering the world in a Mother's arms
wrapped in vulnerability,
we sense the dawn of a new day.

You make our hearts glad and our faces shine,
because You are our treasure,
our hope,
our life,
in this new day.

Amen.