

PARTNERS

The Usk Ministry Area Newsletter

SUMMER 2021



Sally's Message

Hello Friends,

When I was new in my faith I must confess to finding St. Paul very difficult. In fact I didn't like him or his writings. His letters, those chapters towards the end of the bible, felt full of reprimands, hard words of advice, and words of potential encouragement that didn't feel very encouraging at all!

As time has gone on though, I have grown to rather like St. Paul. Yes, he can be blunt and hard to read, but he was doing the most extraordinary work for God in very difficult times. St. Paul was a remarkable man. Funny how things can change isn't it? Funny how we can change.

We have seen huge changes over the last year or so haven't we? I won't bore you by rehashing them, but I do know we have more to come. And as our rhythms of worship return and we find new balances and routines, I wonder whether we are aware of how much we might have changed or how those around us whom we know well are in fact slightly different people?

Has your faith flourished or struggled?

Are you more or less confident around people?

Have you reflected on your commitments and want to make changes?

Are you grieving a loss that others might not recognise?

Are you celebrating something that has changed?

I doubt any of us are the same people we were eighteen months ago, and I suspect that those around us, despite doing their very best to be in touch and stay up to date, don't know everything. We are different people. Those around us are different too. And we may have changed in ways that could draw us closer together, or move us slightly apart. We may have changed in ways that we don't fully understand and that others don't recognise properly.

Now then. None of this is bad news. Far from it. It is simply to say that as much as we might think we know someone, and as much as we might believe someone knows us, there may have been changes that are not obvious or apparent, that may surprise us or catch us off guard.

Which brings me back to St. Paul. You do I'm sure, know the much used passage of one of his letters to the people in Corinth -



Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

We almost know it too well to read it properly and I invite you to go back two lines in this letter to the passage, and read it out loud, slowly.

Now read it again but this time instead of saying the word love say "God". For we know it to be true that God is love.

This is how God is in relationship with you. How wonderfully reassuring is that?

As we continue through this year and all the changes that it will offer us, let us not lose sight of God and his love for each and every one of us. Let us take care in the way we are with each other, ensuring that our conversations, our actions, all that we offer to our churches and to God, comes from a place of patience, kindness, truth, and love. Even when we are in moments of disagreement, let us do that well and generously, never losing sight that we are all God's beloved children. Let us acknowledge the changes and see what we can do to grow and flourish within them. Let us be mindful that those around us have changed, and let us do all that in the context of a God who is unchanging and unconditional in his love for us. Love never fails.

My love and prayers for you all,

Sally xx

News and Views from the Parishes



Christchurch, Coed-y-paen

We are delighted that Christchurch is open again for Services even though we can't accommodate many people due to Covid rules. It's lovely to be back inside the Church again where we enjoy seeing friends and neighbours worshipping together after such a long time.

There has been a really fun and new event in the Village, a Scarecrow competition. This was organised by some of our younger village members, the Morley family, James Family and Gallihawk Family .It not only proved highly successful and great fun



but it raised over £425 to be shared between the Church and Covax .Rev Sally and Rev Graham had the hard job of finding the winners, congratulations to Carol Orchard for winning with a wonderful Captain Tom!!

forward



Carol won a generous voucher from Neil and Nelson the new Landlords at The Carpenters Arms she is looking to enjoying her prize with her two daughters





A huge thank you to everyone for a wonderful Village event and kind donation to Christchurch.

As always the Churchyard looks lovely and very well cared for by our super volunteers, we are making progress with our wildlife project and encouraging many wild flowers and birds.

Thank you to everyone for their continued support and hard work ensuring Christchurch is well looked after and plays an important part in our Village life.

Cilla Davies



St Madoc's, Llanbadoc

Recently we have commissioned tree surgeons to undertake work to the trees in St Madoc's churchyard. The trees at St Madoc's are protected by a preservation order and rightly so.

The magnificent cedars and pines in the churchyard provide a beautiful backdrop to the ancient church and throw a mystical protective cloak to the many buried beneath their branches. To quote Nora Waln "Trees give peace to the souls of men".



As well as the cedars and pines there is yew, spruce, holly, cherry and even walnut. Trees live their life in the really slow lane even when they are in danger perhaps we should all follow their example-take time to savour what is important, enjoy the scene and accept life's ups and downs. As Theodore Roosevelt said "To exist as a nation, to prosper as a people we must have trees". So trim dead wood, brace branches that need to be supported, talk to these ancients and listen to the whispering wind through their canopies.

Hilary Morgan



St. Cybi's, Llangybi

St Cybi's, Llangybi has had a quiet time recently, now it has only two services a month, except for the fact that the acapella choir Byrdsong has chosen to make it one of their rehearsal places on Saturday mornings. We hope the restrictions on singing will soon be permanently banished, not only so that our congregation can sing, but also so that the choir will join us from time to time to add their very special contribution to our worship. We have had many requests for the Drop in Cafe to resume. At the moment the space restrictions that Covid rules place on the hall would take away some of the conviviality that has always been its trademark.

Pamela Love

The summer is here. By now I think we all hoped life would be returning to whatever the 'new normal' would be, but it seems we have to be patient.

I don't know how it has been for other people. I am aware that we are very lucky in rural Monmouthshire compared to life in the bigger towns and cities. We have gardens, footpaths, space; but sometimes it all seems interminable and the spirits dip.

My lockdown treat though, was to home school my grandson, Rufus, through the spring term. He did make the odd comment about working harder at home than in school! It

was fun for both of us though. I have to pay tribute to our Usk Primary School. The whole team there were heroic, producing some really brilliant things for the children to do, and keeping in regular touch by Zoom. I don't know how their workload compared to that when children are in the classroom, but it must have been huge.

Rev'd Sally brought her joyful presence to us last Sunday and we SANG! The joy of it, even with a mask. There were only seven of us, but it felt special. There was that wonderful feeling of uplift and renewal that worship can bring. We are lucky to have Sally, but we need to be aware that she is working very, very hard and needs all the support we can give her.

Yes, the summer IS here. There are still threats from the virus, but I believe that if we are thoughtful of others and reasonably cautious, we can begin to emerge and enjoy it.

Sue Hiscox



St. Peter, Paul & John, Llantrisant & Llanllowell

Our pattern of worship continues on the second and fourth Sundays. We now have approval for up-to 25 people to attend, which means we have the joy of accommodating friends from other congregations when their church does not have a service. Although we still have to be masked and to sit socially distanced we are now allowed to sing.

Reaching out beyond our small congregation Sally spent a Wednesday afternoon in June visiting residents in the immediate village to say hello. She will return on other occasions to visit more widely across the Parish.

Llantrisant now has a number of special events to look forward to this summer. All will be joyous but will require careful planning to comply with Covid restrictions.

On the last Sunday of July, we have been asked to host a Service to be led by the Bishop. This will be in the late afternoon hopefully, if the weather is dry, in the open air.

We also have two weddings this year. It is always a delight when our church is able to host a marriage ceremony and these will be the first for some time. All weddings are unique but these will be particularly so. If current restrictions remain, or are only partially relaxed, social distancing rules will constrain the number of guests

On the first Saturday of August the Bride is from Herefordshire but is the granddaughter of a family who lived in the village over 60 years ago. Her family are commemorated through their donation of our Processional Cross and by a bench in the churchyard.

Then on a Friday in September the Bride is very local having been born and brought up in Llantrisant. Her parents have been benefactors of our church for many years and her father helps mow the churchyard.

Looking further ahead, we need to prepare for the historic administrative changes that will occur next year. Llantrisant and until recently Llanllowell, have been independent Parishes and charities for centuries. Next year, like all the other churches in our Area, we are going to become part of a single new Benefice and Charity covering 20 churches.

The important thing is that we can be engaged in shaping our future arrangements: not just continue to observe decline.

Sometimes history can be useful in these circumstances:

During a recent “clear-out “of old papers in Usk Vicarage I found a copy of the Grapevine. No, not the recent Diocesan version, but Newsletter NO.11 issued by the then Rector of Llanllowell and Llanbadoc dated June 1978.

In this he recounted that Llanbadoc had opted to renounce its amateur status in the Church Cleaning Handicap and go professional. Apparently the number of volunteers had steadily dwindled and the PCC had found some-one willing to do it as a paid job.

In the same edition he reminded readers of the importance of the “ancient and honorable” office of Sidesmen which has a longer history than that of a parochial church councilor. He quoted a Canon of the Church which sets out the duties as including:

“ to promote the cause of the true religion in the parish, to assist the Churchwardens in the discharge of their duties in maintaining order and decency in the church and churchyard, especially during the time of divine service” and “if the church has no verger; unlock the church, welcome visitors, ring the bell, tidy up after service“

Now we clearly need to change the title to Sides persons, but otherwise I think we have a good Job Description for the team of people who should look after their local church when it becomes part of a bigger organization and loses the office of Churchwarden.

Sandy Blair



St Andrew's, Tredunnock

I submit this report on behalf of David Banning-Lover who is taking leave of absence for a few months.

There has been a great deal of activity over these past weeks contributed in the main by David and Rowena, who has also withdrawn from active duty until further notice.

A Virtual Easter Vestry Meeting was held on Tuesday 27th April, chaired by Rev. Sally at which all required reports were submitted.

Sadly, when it came to elections, the meeting was unable to find anyone prepared to stand as either Vicar's or Peoples Warden, a Constitutional requirement to allow Tredunnock as a Parochial Church Council.

A follow up Easter Vestry Meeting is planned for Wednesday 7th July, which will be attended by Archdeacon Ian Rees, who would investigate a way forward for the Parish.

Achievements

The state of some of the trees in the Churchyard have been a major concern of late, resulting in the need to arrange the intervention of Tree Surgeons. Work was approved and permission granted by Archdeacon Sue to continue, in accordance with British Standards.

A visit by the DAC, under the leadership of Archdeacon Jonathan Williams and including a group of experts, was conducted on the 12th May. The purpose of the visit

was to consider the need for a structural survey, especially of the tower, porch, east wall and south window, chancel and vestry.

Rowena included, as part of her People's Warden's report, a comprehensive St. Andrew's Draft Development Plan. This includes long outstanding issues detailed in past Quinquennial reports.

Graham Opperman



Priory Church of St Mary's Usk

St Mary's continue to enjoy 'in person services – alternating said Eucharist at 8.am on 2nd and 4th Sundays with 10.30 'sung' Eucharist at 10.30 on first and third Sundays Singing has obviously been in our heads, and the congregation has enjoyed the recordings made by St Mary's ladies' choir, Judith having added newly acquired technical expertise to

her musical talent to produce some lovely recordings which have been available for playing during services throughout the MA. We did enjoy a good sing of four hymns from behind masks on Sunday 4th July – whether we can repeat this most welcome experience depends on rising numbers of cases within the county. By the time you read this, the choir will hopefully have enjoyed their first practice together in 15months, weather permitting, in the Garden of Remembrance, fully risk assessed and with strict social distancing of course.

If you have walked through the church yard, or attended any of our services, you will have noticed that the tubs outside the two porches have been given a makeover and provide wonderful display of colour, and the decorations on the gates have an eco-theme – bees and butterflies galore!! Many thanks to the faithful few who have given their time to help with the planters, decorations and the tidying of the church yard (still plenty of scope for more of the latter! and we welcome any help available.)



St Mary's continues to be open for private prayer on a Thursday 10- 12 midday, and at 11 a.m. each Thursday the service of Wholeness and Healing takes place in the chancel - this is a very special and meaningful service designed to bring comfort and hope - both to the worshipers and those they pray for . Should you feel moved to give it a try you will be made most welcome.

Sarah Byford & Carol Southwell

The Knitting Group

Until we have the all-clear for public meetings, our display in support of The Raven House Trust must remain on hold. Thanks to our generous donors, entry and refreshments will be free, so we look forward to welcoming many. June Howells' handiwork

In the meantime, we continue to keep busy with our next project, small garments to be sold in our St. David's Hospice Shop. The illustration shows just one of the items available and are grateful that our contributors have been sending us some really beautiful home-knits



We try not to waste anything, so, when we were recently given a quantity of 100% pure cotton, we decided to make cloths for dishwashing and glass polishing, perhaps not as dainty as our usual offerings, but practical and long-lasting (we hope). When we do have left-overs, we send them to a lady who makes blankets for people in Care Homes or perhaps housebound, so anything donated goes to good use.

Elizabeth Baker



Liz (Baker) is a proficient knitter, but she confesses to being to horticulture what Sarah is to cooking – a threat to life!! However, never one to resist a challenge, Liz sowed the seeds which Sally included in the Lent Bag (did anyone else do this I wonder?) What you see in the photo is the miraculous result! - Supposedly basil, thyme and mint – a prize for the first to correctly identify which is which! Well done Liz! - Your fingers are clearly greener than you thought – or is it simply a case of answered prayers!?



St Thomas à Becket, Wolvesnewton.

It is good to be having regular services in the church again, even with no singing. Meeting up with friends in the parish has been especially nice, despite having to wear masks still. There is not much confidence yet amongst the members of the congregation about returning to a 'normal' state, but things are improving.

We have had a slight increase in congregation numbers since re-opening, which is very encouraging. Maybe this is a direct result of the Covid outbreak, and people needing spiritual help in these still difficult times. Interestingly there have been visitors from the proposed greater Ministry area coming to our service when their church is not having one.

As the Covid rules about distancing and meeting up ease, we intend to start using the new tables and chairs brought in as part of the tower restoration project. The compost toilet also needs to be commissioned, once the wasp nest is removed and the original connection plans are found again. We hope this will give us an advantage with our application for an Eco church certificate, although Eco church is not an easy website to access [any advice please?].

In the last month we have been rather sad to see our Rev. Bob and Scilla move away from Wolvesnewton. Fortunately, they intend to come to and officiate at our services, but we will sorely miss their presence in our valley. We are eternally grateful for their massive support and generous opening of their lovely home to us for so many church events; Harvest festivals, BBQs, fund raisers, PCC meetings to name but a few. When St Thomas was closed for the building work in 2019 we were so glad to have the use of their comfortable large room for our HE services. They were very special times as we came together as a community and celebrated our Faith in the round. May God bless Scilla and Bob as they take on new challenges in their lives.

Bryony Jacques

The Ministry of Wholeness, Healing and Reconciliation

One of the greatest opportunities the Church has today for sharing the gospel message is to acknowledge the importance of the healing ministry in our society.

We consider how the early church started. Jesus went about, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, healing the sick – and then teaching others to do the same.

What is special about Christian Healing?

Bishop Morris, a contributor to the report for the House of Bishops, published in 2000, entitled, “A Time to Heal” helps us with his writing.

“Christian healing is, first and foremost, about Christ. It follows the pattern he set in his own ministry and the commission he gave to his disciples – and the fact that it happens at all, is the fruit of his work, both in the creation and in the salvation of humankind.

In both these mighty works, humankind has been created in the image of God – humankind has been made whole. This is what distinguishes Christian healing from other types of healing.

It is the whole work of Christ, in a person’s body, mind and spirit, designed to **bring that person to that wholeness which is God’s will for us all**”.

A number of very important recommendations came out of the report to the House of Bishops. Amongst others:

- That parishes should be encouraged to regard the healing ministry as an important expression of the broad mission of the Church, particularly to those suffering disease and distress in the wider community. ***The call is for us to minister to all kinds of brokenness, at all levels, as part of everyday life.***
- Parishes should ensure that the healing ministry is a part of normal everyday life, integrated into the wide range of activities already carried out, particularly pastoral care.
- It needs to be made readily available to everyone, ***including those who do not attend church regularly.***
- Since it is recognised that lay people are members of the priesthood of all believer and that being healed and helping others to be healed is part of our discipleship. ***The gifts of the members of our congregations must be encouraged and developed, under the guidance of the clergy, with suitable teaching being provided.***

We have at our disposal, some excellent resources for teaching about the ministry of healing and it is hoped that interest from our parish folk will encourage us to embark on an effective programme to help equip healing ministry teams.

Healing, reconciliation and restoration are integral to the good news of Jesus Christ. For this reason, prayer for individuals, focused through laying on of hands and anointing with oil has a proper place within the public prayer of the Church.

God’s gracious activity of healing is to be seen both as part of the proclaiming of the good news and as an outworking of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church.

Rev. Peter Marshall from his book “Mr. Jones meets the Master”, first published in 1954. quotes as follows:

- “God has not withdrawn any power that was available in the days of the first disciples. There is certainly no indication in the Bible that the power given to them was for a certain period only, or to work in a certain location. It was not like a free trial offer advertised “good only for thirty days”.
- “Everywhere He went, Christ was confronted with sickness and disease – and everywhere, He did something about it. Yet, there were times when He could do no mighty works, as Mark puts it, because of unbelief. Where there was no faith – He was powerless. There were many cases of sickness where no healing was sought”.

The quotes from the Reverend Peter Marshall, penned so many years ago, supported by the more modern revelation and contribution by the House of Bishops in 2000 should encourage us to look afresh at the challenges which confront us, to engage with Christ’s Commission.

“Then Jesus called the Twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and power to cure diseases. *He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick*”. (Luke 9. 1 – 2)

In the Usk Ministry Area, we have, for the past seven years, been obedient to Christ’s Commission by holding weekly services, of Wholeness, Healing and Reconciliation at St. Mary’s. You are welcome to join us every Thursday at 11h00 for a time of prayer and communion.

Sadly, very few other churches in the Diocese have followed the call and as a result, Bishop Cherry has set up a Working Group with the task of encouraging **all** of our churches to become involved in this most vital ministry.

This Group has been actively involved in promoting on a regular basis, Virtual Services of Healing, Wholeness and Reconciliation and I invite you to contact me for details on when these are planned.

Also please get in touch with me if you wish to receive a complete copy of this contribution to the Newsletter.

Graham Opperman

The development of the new Ministry area is progressing and Usk MA is well represented on each of the four Ministry Area Transition Team (MATT) groups. We are being kept up to date with progress by our representative on the communications group, Dee Seabourne, who has circulated the first Bulletin electronically, and paper copies are also available in the churches.

We look forward to welcoming St Tegfeth, Llandegveth and St John, Llanhennock who will be joining us in the Usk Ministry Area in August.

Finally - my sincere thanks to all who have contributed to this edition of Partners.

Sarah Byford - Editor

