



Margam

Ministry Area Magazine



December 2023



Share the Warmth

this **WINTER**

FOR THE HOMELESS

HATS, GLOVES, SCARVES, BATTERIES,
TORCHES, THICK SOCKS, UNWANTED
CHRISTMAS TOILETRIES, TOOTHPASTE
AND TOOTH BRUSHES

Starting Sun 31st Dec

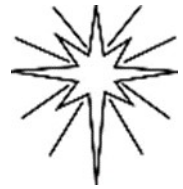
Collectors:- **St Theodore's** - Margaret G or James;
St James - Vanessa; **All Saint's** - Lydia;
St John the Baptist - Judith;
St Mary Magdalene - Jan Battrick;
St David's - Catherine or Carolyn

MARGAM MINISTRY AREA

M

MISSION

MISSION, OUTREACH
CHILDREN AND YOUNG
PEOPLE



Happy Christmas

It's beginning to feel a lot like Christmas! Everyone is busy and that is reflected in this issue of the magazine. It's lovely to share news from the churches across the Ministry Area. There are lots of opportunities too for us to visit the other churches at events and services to renew acquaintances and make new friends. Amongst all that hustle and bustle we are reminded to seek out moments of quiet and reflection. Maybe when we look at a Christmas tree, we can take a moment to enjoy and wonder. Perhaps as we race from shop to shop we can pause briefly in front of a crib in a window. Or maybe we can take a calming breath as we gaze at the altar in church.

This December issue is another chance to pause and reflect as you read through the articles. We're lucky to have such a rich mix of folk within our church family. A big thank-you to our many contributors (for this issue and throughout the year) and to our advertisers- without your input this magazine just wouldn't be.

Please continue with your contributions in 2024 - our first issue is January/February, so articles to me by 20 January, please. And if you know of anyone who'd like to advertise with us, please direct them to me before 20 January.

Have a sparkling Christmas and a peaceful New Year.
See you in 2024!

Helen Murdoch

*Please send magazine or website contributions to me at:
helen@helenmurdochmarketing.com or call me on 01656 773645 or 07721 864493.
or by post to 7 Birch Walk, Porthcawl CF36 5AN*

Cover Image: Margam Calling celebrated its first birthday and welcomed Bishop Mary to cut the cake!

Keep up with Ministry Area news and updates:

On the brand new website: www.margam.org.uk

And remember the Facebook pages too:

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Dear Friends,

António Manuel de Oliveira Guterres (secretary-general of the United Nations), once said, when UN High Commissioner for Refugees – *"Never has there been a greater need for tolerance, compassion and solidarity with people who have lost everything."*

As we look towards the great feast of Christmas and as we see the current state of things globally, especially in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, these words seem as relevant as ever. We are witnesses to many people/communities being displaced and having to flee areas of conflict to discover compassion, a welcome and that great sense of home. This very much connects to the experience of the Holy Family when they discovered there was no room for them in Bethlehem!

The biblical accounts of the nativity do not paint a rosy picture for the Holy Family, but rather provide the context into which Jesus, God incarnate, was born - occupying Roman forces, with Herod, the mad dictator, in charge. Then remember Mary and Joseph did not travel to Bethlehem just for the mandatory census, but this treacherous journey was about a cruel tax! Understanding this context, we realise that life was very difficult and vulnerable for the Holy Family, but we also realise that the God we worship is not one who is remote or distant from the worst humanity can throw at people.

There are many in our community for whom Christmas is not going to be a time of celebration, but rather something to survive. While we cannot remove all the challenges they may face this Christmas, we can make our contribution to alleviate some of their stress and fear. This can be through the 'Christmas Sparkle,' the 'Posada' initiatives, and through the many international appeals supporting refugees. It was once said, it is *'better to light a candle rather than to curse the darkness!'* (Confucius)

As Christians, Christmas provides us with the opportunity to thank God for his abundant gifts which he so readily offers us. May we take the opportunity to share that same mercy and generosity this Christmas to those we encounter and who seek our help, so that they too can experience some of the joy this great feast provides. The

narrative of the Christmas story tells us that we are neither forgotten nor abandoned, but in which we are reminded that God loves us so much that he chose to take on human flesh to live as one with us!

*Out of all the :
beautiful houses
Well-to-do families
Professionals in Bethlehem
Families of the Pharisees
Beautiful girls in Judea
Richest cities in the world
Jesus was born
In a cattle shed
To a poor, insignificant but obedient family
To a carpenter named Joseph
And a young woman, Mary
In Bethlehem*

May your Holy Spirit enable us to realise that your birth indicates that our mission involves working with the:

*Marginalised
Destitute
Forgotten
Ignored
Rejected
Oppressed
Abandoned
And untouchables*

Goodwin Zainga

Wherever you are celebrating Christmas, may I take this opportunity to wish you and all whom you love a very blessed, holy and meaningful Christmas and New Year.

Love and prayers,
Fr. Jonathan

P.S. May I also take this opportunity to thank Helen Murdoch, James Thomas and all of you who have submitted contributions over this year and who have made this wonderful publication possible. It is very much appreciated.

Christmas - a reality check

Rev Dr Duncan Walker

We are all products of our past, and at this time, with Christmas celebrations in every shop aisle, the ghosts of former years are upon us all. Before Jesus was ever mentioned in Europe these months were a time for frenzied celebrations. We see this at Stonehenge where archaeologists are amazed at the number of parties held by our ancestors.

This tendency has always been with us. For most, Christmas is a time of full trolleys and Amazon deliveries. It seems to be hard-wired in us all that our celebration is about acquiring more. This especially comes home when we queue behind someone at the supermarket with two full trolleys. To be fair, they are simply doing their best to mark this once-a-year event. And yet there is the worry, even for those who love Jesus, that this hysteria of tinsel and purchasing takes us far away from the event we are celebrating. A reality check might help.

It is worth remembering just how poor Mary and Joseph were, and most others too. In those days, it was common for people to die for the want of basics. Today someone is seen as poor if they can't afford a television, in the Holy Land at the time of the birth of our Lord, if a family got through the year without losing someone to malnutrition, they felt they were doing well.

As an example of this grinding poverty, think about our treasured National Health Service. If the health board announced that births would take place in local farm buildings, people would be deeply concerned. It seems far-fetched, but that was the reality of the birth of Jesus. Mary and Joseph were far from home, alone and forced to use a stable for His birth. We would not want this, but the Holy Family had to.

Not only is this disturbing, but it is worth remembering that Jesus was Mary's first child, and this was a dangerous time. Mary was as young as 12 or 13, and being essentially a child herself, like many other young mothers in the Holy Land, child birth was often fatal. All this means that this time was very hard for them.

We have to further consider who gazed upon the holy child. The visitors were marginalised people, even the Kings were foreigners. The shepherds were viewed with disdain by society, as ruffians who should be kept at arm's length. Their flocks were probably going to be sacrificed at the Temple. So it is poignant that the shepherds visit the Holy Lamb of God.

So, our joy is not quite what the shops are selling. Of course, we celebrate! But the fundamental point is that if excess and debt were valued by God, the birth of our Lord would have been very different. There were many palaces and yet Jesus was born in a humble stable. Would God want us to get into debt, or waste money on things which cannot reflect His Glory? We need a prayerful time as we focus on the joy of the Word made flesh. It is the fulfilment of God's promise as the Holy Family blesses us all. We need to be peaceful, trying to count our blessings. A time when we are overwhelmed by what the birth of Jesus means to us and the world. The carols try to point us in the right direction. Let this be a blessed happening, as we adore the Holy Child.

Duncan

Welcome to Fr Wayne

The Rev'd Wayne David has been appointed as Vicar in the Ministry Area of Margam. Fr Wayne is currently Chaplain at Llandaff Cathedral School. He will be joining us in the New Year and will be based in Porthcawl.

We look forward to meeting you soon, Fr Wayne.



Welcome

800th anniversary of the first Nativity play

This Christmas countless millions of Nativity sets around the world will be unpacked and put on display in our homes, churches, shops and other locations, both inside and out.

The first nativity scene was created by St Francis of Assisi in Greccio in Italy on Christmas Day December 1223.

Francis spent many hours meditating on the stories of Christ's life and travelled to the Holy Land to see the various holy sites of Jesus's life. This moved him deeply as it brought the Bible stories to life.

Back in Italy, he wanted to share some of that inspiration with others. He asked his friend, the Lord of Greccio, Giovanni Velita, to prepare a cave in the village with live animals and a hay-filled manger. That cave became the first ever Nativity and many people came to see the simple scene.

It is said that through the Nativity, Francis wanted people to imagine the poverty and simplicity into which Jesus was born.

Soon other communities were staging their own Nativities. Some with life-size models in their gardens and others with smaller sets displayed indoors.

Hundreds of thousands of Nativities will be on display all around the world this Christmas with different versions from homemade sets to mass produced ones. One fascinating aspect of the Nativity set is that, as you travel around the world, you find different characters and different animals included that reflect the culture of the country in which they are made.

I was lucky enough to visit the Crib Festival in Llandaff Cathedral where there was a huge range of Nativity scenes on display. From matchbox size to life-size, simple to sophisticated, and made of all sorts of materials from wood, fabric and plaster to shells, precious metals and, of course, the inside of toilet rolls! They were all truly wonderful and a fitting way to mark this 800th anniversary.



Curious?

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Alpha



Advent

John Berry BEM

According to Acts, “Old men shall dream dreams”!

I reckon I’m young enough to have visions!! When looking at coming events my mind suddenly went back to 1973; amongst other things I was organist and choirmaster at St. Cedds, Stifford. At an autumn planning meeting with the rector, he suggested we should have something like an Advent Carol Service instead of evensong on Advent Sunday. I don’t know why I said it or where it came from, but I suggested an Advent Procession. Neither of us had ever had anything to do with an Advent Procession, but we would do something different. He was going away and would think about it on his return; I started researching it myself.

The season of Advent in the Christian calendar anticipates the coming of Christ from three different perspectives: the physical nativity in Bethlehem, the reception of Christ in the heart of the believer, and the eschatological Second Coming.

I looked up appropriate readings to the three principles linking them with hymns, carols, anthems and suitable songs. We had a very good, small choir that I knew would enjoy the challenge; the Boys Section had recently gained the St. Nicholas Award of the Royal School of Church Music. I wrote music for the Advent Prose to suit the building and the choir, the rector readily agreed to my proposal and left it to me.

There had been some muttering about cancelling Evensong for some hifalutin’ nonsense of the organist; we wondered if this would reduce the congregation badly – evensong usually had a congregation of 35 to 40. Three brothers in the choir volunteered their father to make candelabra for the congregation and choir stalls. We had rehearsed the music for some time, but had only one rehearsal of the procession – immediately before the service with a twenty minutes break.

I led the choir outside the church to the main entrance where we lit candles for the choir. The churchwarden came to help with lighting candles and said he would let me know when we could go in. They

were making room for us as the church was packed to standing, even with additional chairs!

The last of the church lights were switched off, as we squeezed into the back of the church to sing the Advent Prose the head boy whispered into my ear, "Where have all these people come from?"

The service was a powerful experience; it proceeded smoothly and positively, the choirboys lighting more candles when we stopped for readings and music as we processed to the choirstalls.

At the conclusion in the vestry the rector said a prayer and quiet thank you. There was complete silence for almost a minute, nobody moved. Usually everybody would be chattering and the rector would leave to speak to the congregation. I then thanked everybody; the churchwarden came in to add his thanks.

One of the younger boys said he thought God would have enjoyed it because he had enjoyed it. Another asked, "Have we made history tonight Mr Berry?!"

At the rehearsal I had 'conducted' with the pencil I used to mark my music, though during the service I used only one finger. When I took off my surplice I discovered the pencil had been behind my ear throughout the entire service!

There was no doubt we were led to hold this act of worship at which we felt the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Journeying with God in the Wilderness

Congratulations to Rev'd Mark Broadway on the publication of his first book in which he invites us to 'Journey with God in the Wilderness' in this new forty-day devotional.

Jesus' forty days in the wilderness, which many Christians remember during Lent, echoes the story of God's people wandering for forty years in the wilderness. The book of Numbers tells of these wanderings but can be difficult to get to grips with. Delving into this book alongside the New Testament and reflecting with prayers and questions, Mark explores how the Israelites' wilderness journey can speak to us in our daily struggles and challenges today.

The Same Story, Different Traditions

During the four weeks leading up to Christmas Christians around the world recognise the season of Advent.

It means 'coming'. It's a time of spiritual preparation when '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.



Around the world at Christmas the same story is told but often with different traditions. Originally Christians marked Advent as a time when they refrained from excessive eating and drinking until Christmas Day reintroduced them to the joys of feasting. The Christmas celebrations lasted for 12 days, with gifts exchanged as a climax at Epiphany on 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', when decorations are taken down.

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. While most Christians celebrate on 25 December, some, such as the ancient Orthodox Churches in Eastern Europe and parts of Asia, follow a different calendar and celebrate Christmas on 7 January.

Christians make a point of taking communion on Christmas Day whenever it is, and many make it the first thing they do as the clock strikes midnight. This is the opportunity that Midnight Mass gives us. You can also take communion at all churches in the Ministry Area on Christmas Day - full details of all Christmas services are on page 19.

While the world celebrates the coming and birth of Jesus with different traditions, and sometimes at different times, the story is always the same.

A Town called Bethlehem - in Wales

When we stand in church this Christmas Eve and sing the carol 'O Little Town Of Bethlehem', most of us will be thinking of the settlement in the Holy Land, famous as the birthplace of Jesus Christ. It may be thousands of miles from its more famous namesake but a tiny farming village in West Wales shares this famous name.

There are in fact more than 20 Bethlehems around the world and the village near Llandeilo is among the smallest - just a cluster of homes and surrounding farms.

The two Bethlehems have a rolling landscape in common - the original in the hill country of Judea, the Welsh one on the edge of the Brecon Beacons National Park.

The Carmarthenshire Bethlehem was first known as Dyffryn Ceidrich, but when the famous name of Bethlehem was given to the chapel in the early 19th century, the village took it too.

For decades, people would flock here every December. Some would just want to drive through, while others would come here especially to post their Christmas cards, complete with that most Christmassy of post marks: Bethlehem.

The post office closed in the early 2000s - today there is a post box outside the village hall. Throughout December, however, the hall turns back the clock by opening up for people wishing to get the 'Bethlehem stamp' on their Christmas cards.

In a time when people usually only communicate by email or text, to receive a card from Wales with this very special postmark once a year is still appreciated.





ROTARY PORTHCAWL
with ALL SAINTS' CHURCH



Christmas Tree Festival 2023

December 5th—17th

at

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, PORTHCAWL

CHURCH OPEN FOR VIEWING FROM 11 AM TO 5PM

(11.30AM—4.30PM ON 17TH)

Rotary Young Musician Competition

Wednesday 6th Dec. 7pm

oooooooooooooooooooo

Festival Concert

Thursday 7th Dec. 7pm

Christmas Hamper Raffle

Everyone welcome—free entry

News from All Saints



November is a time of remembrance and this year's Remembrance Service was extremely well attended despite the weather. It was a very moving occasion and the poppy displays in church created by Newton WI added to the atmosphere. We were so lucky that the rain held off for the Act of Remembrance and the laying of wreaths.

Many congratulations to Sue and Walter Coughlin who celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary – we hope you had a wonderful celebration weekend! Congratulations also go to Ruth Birch who was awarded her PgCE PCET (Professional Graduate Certificate in Education) at a wonderful graduation ceremony at Pencoed College. Ruth, like your Mum Barbara, we are all so proud of your achievements.

We were pleased to welcome George Baker to our servers team as our new boat boy. George is quick to learn and is settling in very well.

Thank you once again to Fr Graham Holcombe for stepping in. It is always such a joy to have you with us. Our choir have also excelled themselves with two new anthems – Christ hath a Garden was a special request from Fr Graham and was followed up last week with Here is Bread. Both were beautifully sung and we'll be listening out for more treats in the future!

The Karl Parsons stained glass window in All Saints attracts a great deal of interest. Dr Martin Crampin recently brought a small group of stained glass artists and experts to examine the east window more closely. One of the party is writing her PhD thesis on the work of Karl Parsons and declared this example of his work "the best I've ever seen"! Want to know more, then visit www.visitstainedglass.uk/location/church-of-all-saints-porthcawl-glamorgan

We are looking forward to the Christmas Tree Festival which always adds a sparkle to our Christmas preparations. The church looks so beautiful, do come and see it.

We're also looking forward to welcoming Mary and Joseph into our homes as the Posada travels around Porthcawl. The (knitted) Holy Family are hosted for one night and passed on to the next home with a prayer.

Wishing you all a very happy Christmas and peaceful New Year.

Newton Nottage Mothers' Union

Judith Shawe

Many congratulations to Sue and Walter Coughlin who celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary in November. Sue is a loyal and respected member of our branch, and a great example of MU ideals. Hope you both had a good day!

Welcome to Rosy Slater who was enrolled at our last meeting - may you have lots of fun and fellowship with us!

The Thursday Group have restarted the Posada tradition: Mary and Joseph (in knitted form) travel from house to house in the area, looking for a place to stay. They end their journey at the Crib Service at All Saints at 3pm on Christmas Eve - everyone is welcome to this. Perhaps you can find the hay for the stable or the sheep for the shepherd to bring. They, among other items, will be hidden around the church, waiting to be found and put into the stable. Thank you for building it Tony! By the time you read this, Mary and Joseph will be well on their way on the wild and dangerous road to Bethlehem.

Our indoor members, Joyce Bowen and Madge Wallis, celebrated their birthdays this month. Joyce is 99 and Madge is 101!! Must be the sea air! A very happy birthday to you both from us all. I'd also like to thank Barbara Davies for her sterling work in sending greetings cards to all our members throughout the year - thank you, Barbara.

Jacinth from the Thursday Group has put yellow buckets in the churches to collect toiletries etc for Ty Bronna - please be generous with your donations. Everything donated at 'Come and Sing Xmas Carols' and the Croeso Tea in All Saints on the 9th December will also go to Ty Bronna (hostel for young, homeless people in Cardiff).

Don't forget to view the MU tree in the Lady Chapel in All Saints at the Rotary Christmas tree festival starting on the 5th December. Kelly and Maria always do a great job ...

Love from us all at Newton Nottage MU - have a lovely time over the festive season.

May God bless us all, each and everyone.



News from St David's

Catherine Powell

Christmas festivities have started early in St David's with a wreath making workshop led by Gordon Jones of the Cottage Garden Florist in Nelson. Luckily for us Gordon lives in Porthcawl and his family worship with us here in St David's.

We enjoyed a demonstration first to guide us through the process, followed by each participant making their own wreath. The evening was completed with bubbles and a buffet. It was a lovely evening to share with Margam Ministry Area.

200 Club - Saturday 4th November at St David's

Linda Fletcher

We were a smaller gathering than usual for St David's but the weather was awful and some of our regulars were away on a trip - we hope they had a lovely time and better weather!

It was lovely to see Fr Jonathan and we thank him for doing both the 200 Club draw and the raffle for us. Janice and the kitchen team had prepared warming soups and they were very well received.

This quarter's winners were:

£100 - E. A. Harding (233)	£75 - Susan Carvill (77)
£50 - Martin Parkinson (218)	£25 - Margaret Case (82)

We had two stalls - one with 'Jean's Boxes' and one with assorted seasonal makes including some very popular chutney. Some of the unsold goods went with Helen Owen and were offered at coffee after All Saints' Sunday Mass. Thanks to this we made: £61 from tickets; £44 from the raffle; and £122 from the stalls; making a total of £227. Minus expenses of £12.60 that leaves £214.40 for the church

Our thanks, as ever, for your support and generosity. Special thanks to Eryn for manning the 'box' stall, to Maggie for selling the raffle tickets & helping in the kitchen, and Helen, our mobile saleslady, and Kevin for manning the door & sorting the money. We hope he enjoyed his birthday with us and the rousing singing of Happy Birthday!

Our next 200 Club will be on 17th February 2024 in St John's School-room - see you there!

Services & Events for Advent and Christmas 2023

The following are in addition to the usual weekday and Sunday services.

Saturday 2nd December:

10am: Christmas Fayre, MARGAM ABBEY

3pm: Dynamic Harps, MARGAM ABBEY

Sunday 3rd December, Advent 1:

4pm: Christingle Service, ST JAMES PYLE

5pm: Christingle Service, ST MARY MAGDALENE, MAUDLAM

6pm: Darkness to Light, ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, NEWTON

Tuesday 5th December:

Porthcawl Rotary Christmas Tree Festival, ALL SAINTS, PORTHCAWL

Viewing daily from 11am - 5pm until Sunday 17th December

2pm: O Come Let Us Adore Him, PYLE CHURCH HALL

Friday 8th December:

9.30am: Mynydd Cynffig Primary School Christmas Concert,
ST THEODORE'S, KENFIG HILL

Saturday 9th December:

2pm: Come & Sing Christmas Carols, ALL SAINTS, PORTHCAWL

2pm: Christingle Workshop, MARGAM ABBEY

3pm: Christingle Service, MARGAM ABBEY

6pm: Bois Goetre-Hen Male Voice Choir & soloist Rhian Pritchard,
ST THEODORE'S, KENFIG HILL

Sunday 10th December, Advent 2:

4pm: Nine Lessons & Carols, ST JAMES, PYLE

4.00pm: Lights to Remember, MARGAM ABBEY

5pm: Nine Lessons & Carols, ST MARY MAGDALENE, MAUDLAM

5:30pm: Christmas Margam Calling, ST THEODORE'S, KENFIG HILL

Tuesday 12th December:

Carol Singing around Pyle and Kenfig

Wednesday 13th December:

7pm: Lifeboat Carol Service, ALL SAINTS, PORTHCAWL

Friday 15th December:

10.30am: Coffee Morning & Raffle Draw, PYLE CHURCH HALL

Saturday 16th December:

4pm: Nine Lessons & Carols by Candlelight, MARGAM ABBEY
followed by mulled wine

Sunday 17th December, Advent 3:

4.30pm: Experience Christmas, Benediction, MARGAM ABBEY

3pm: Nine Lessons & Carols, ST THEODORE'S, KENFIG HILL

6pm: MA Service, ST MARY MAGDALENE, MAUDLAM

Monday 18th December:

2pm: Mothers' Union Carol Service, ST MARY MAGDALENE, MAUDLAM

Tuesday 19th December:

10am, Pyle School at ST JAMES, PYLE

1.30pm: Afon-y-Felin at ST MARY MAGDALENE, MAUDLAM

7pm: Cynffig Comprehensive School Christmas Carol Concert,
ST THEODORE'S, KENFIG HILL

Sunday 24th December, Advent 4, Christmas Eve:

3pm: Crib Service with Living Nativity, MARGAM ABBEY

4pm: Family Crib Service, ST THEODORE'S, KENFIG HILL

5pm: Crib service & Christmas Communion, ST JAMES, PYLE

6pm: Lessons & Carols, ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, NEWTON

6pm: Crib service & Christmas Communion,
ST MARY MAGDALENE, MAUDLAM

9pm: First Mass of Christmas, ALL SAINTS, PORTHCAWL

11pm: Midnight Mass, MARGAM ABBEY

11pm: Midnight Mass, with Blessing of the Crib,
ST THEODORE'S, KENFIG HILL

Monday 25th December, Christmas Day:

8am: Mass for Christmas Day, ALL SAINTS, PORTHCAWL

8.30am: Mass for Christmas Day, ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, NEWTON

9am: Holy Communion, ST MARY MAGDALENE, MAUDLAM

9.30am: Mass for Christmas Day, ST DAVID'S, NOTTAGE

10am: Mass for Christmas Day, ALL SAINTS, PORTHCAWL

10am: Contemplative Mass (Said), MARGAM ABBEY

10am: Christmas Day Eucharist, ST THEODORE'S, KENFIG HILL

10.30am, Holy Communion, ST JAMES, PYLE

11am: Mass for Christmas Day, ST JOHN THE BAPTIST, NEWTON

Tuesday 26th December:

12noon: Said Eucharist for the Fest of St Stephen,
ST THEODORE'S, KENFIG HILL

Sunday 31st December:

10am, Said Mass, MARGAM ABBEY

11am: MA Mass, MARGAM ABBEY



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Liberty lib'ar-ti, n.

freedom from constraint, captivity, slavery, or tyranny: freedom to do as one pleases:

the unrestrained enjoyment of natural rights: power of free choice : privileges:

permission free range: leisure: disposal: the bounds within which certain privileges are enjoyed .

"Chambers"

News from St John's



Diane Jackson

December already! How the year has flown. Much has happened, some good, some not so good with the war in Ukraine still going on and now joined with the war in the Middle East.

We have much to look forward to in December, starting with our Special Christmas Coffee Morning on 1st December. That will be closely followed by our Sunday Evening service, Darkness into Light. Many other services are planned and full details are elsewhere in this magazine. Even if you do not come to church very often, perhaps some of the services that are being offered, may tempt you to attend one at this special time in the church's calendar.

After approximately 40 years, Denver is closing the savings account which many of us have contributed to as means of saving for Christmas. Over the years when interest rates were good, it was a good source of extra income for the church. As we will be without a proper (physical) bank in the town (not sure how the proposed bank hubs will work) from what we know it will not be practical for the Saving Club to continue. Our sincere thanks to Denver for keeping it going for so many years.

At the time of writing, I have just heard that a new Vicar (not Rector apparently) will be joining us in the New Year. We look forward to meeting him and pray for his ministry with us. We hope he will settle quickly and be happy and fulfilled in his new role.

On that note, I wish everyone a happy peaceful Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year



News from St Theodore's

Margaret Griffiths

'Tis the season of Christmas Fayres!!

St Theodore's is having a stall at the Christmas Fayre in Pyle Church Hall on 25th November – featuring items from Theo's Charity Shop. Manned by Heulwen one of the Theo's volunteers – be careful she won't let you pass without trying to sell you something!

On 30th November, St Theodore's is hosting a session of the Church in Wales safeguarding training. A warm welcome to all those who will be attending.

Following their monthly meeting on Wednesday 6th December, St Theodore's Mothers' Union will be going to the Greenacres in North Cornelly for their Christmas lunch. Non-MU members are welcome to join them.

Tickets are available for the Bois-Goetre-Hen Male Voice Choir concert



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www.margam.org.uk/st-theodores-theos

in St Theodore's on Saturday 9th December. You can get your tickets from Theo's Charity Shop, Bridge Street, Kenfig Hill (next door to the Spar).

I'm sure we will be singing some Christmas songs at the Goldies sing-a-long session at 11.00 am on Wednesday 13th December, there will be mince pies as well! This will be followed by a Christmas Bulb planting session led by Christine Portsmouth. Numbers are limited so sign up if you are interested. Bulbs and pots provided.

A reminder that Mynydd Cynffig Primary school will be in St Theodore's for their Christmas concert on Friday 8th December and Cynffig Comprehensive will join us for their Christmas Carol concert on the 19th December.

Just to clarify and amend the omission in last month's magazine in the list of Christmas services and events, St Theodore's has a Mid-night Mass at 11.00 pm on Christmas Eve.

Last but not least – our Christmas raffle tickets are on sale:

1st prize – Luxury Christmas Hamper

2nd prize – Drinks Hamper

3rd prize – Luxurious Toiletry Hamper

4th prize – Chocolate, Biscuit and Sweet Hamper

Plus, many more prizes.

We are very grateful to Moyra for providing the hamper prizes.

I'm off now for the filming of the Ministry Area digital Christmas card! Keep a look out for this in early December on social media and on YouTube!

A decorative cursive script for "Merry Christmas" with elaborate flourishes and swirls.



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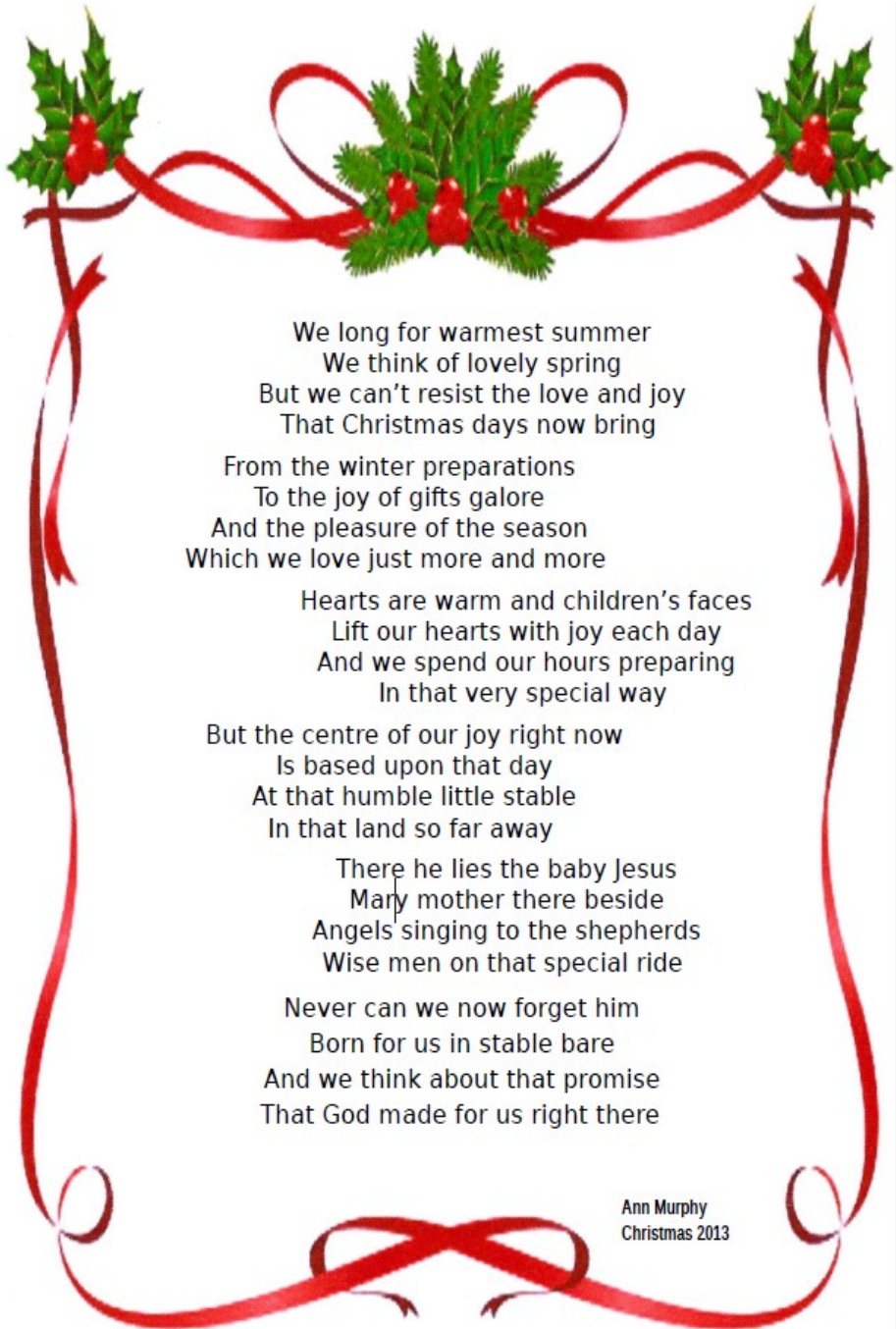
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We long for warmest summer
We think of lovely spring
But we can't resist the love and joy
That Christmas days now bring
From the winter preparations
To the joy of gifts galore
And the pleasure of the season
Which we love just more and more
Hearts are warm and children's faces
Lift our hearts with joy each day
And we spend our hours preparing
In that very special way
But the centre of our joy right now
Is based upon that day
At that humble little stable
In that land so far away
There he lies the baby Jesus
Mary mother there beside
Angels singing to the shepherds
Wise men on that special ride
Never can we now forget him
Born for us in stable bare
And we think about that promise
That God made for us right there

Ann Murphy
Christmas 2013

News from Margam Abbey

Bev Gulley



November was a poignant month:

On the 11th we held a simple Act of Remembrance and on the Sunday there was a well-attended Remembrance Service. During both services there was a WW1 re-enactment soldier at the War Memorial, which added to the pathos.

A fantastic 'Moliant Morgannwg' concert, in a packed church, was held for the Glamorgan Royal Welsh Agricultural Society, where a 70-strong Cowbridge Choir, Penclawdd Brass Band and several soloists delighted us with their talents.

There were several birthdays:

Canon Hanford, Mother Ruth and young Harri Davies.

The 23rd November saw our 875th Anniversary Year celebrations draw to a close with an Evensong and Benediction sung by The Elizabeth Singers and where Fr Mark Preece, Precentor at the Cathedral, and Archdeacon elect, preached the sermon.

The series of successful Saturday talks continued with The Life of Theodore Mansel Talbot. The Theatrical History Tour was, as ever, a great success. Many thanks to all of the theatrical tour players.

The new DIY Literary Festival was a wonderful and moving evening enjoyed by all and definitely to be repeated. Thank you Gareth Scourfield for your idea and organisation.

Our Mothers' Union attended a lunch in aid of 'Save the Children' and Faith Sullivan was an inspirational speaker at the regular monthly meeting, talking about her life with Buddy her guide dog, and the amazing work of Guide Dogs Cymru. In December, the MU joins with Cwm Brombil Ladies WI for a talk by Pam Scourfield on the Vestments followed by refreshments and carols.

The MU meets on the 3rd Monday at 2pm.

December:

Happy Birthday to Averil who is 80 years young on the 1st December.

Happy
Birthday!



December:

Please do join us for our packed month of events, where the Gift Shop will be open (with a range of fantastic Christmas present ideas), refreshments available, and there is free entry and parking. You will enjoy a friendly atmosphere and dogs are always welcome.

Saturday 2nd

Christmas Fayre 10am with Dynamic Harps Concert 3pm

Saturday 9th

Christingle Workshop 2pm / Service 3pm.

Sunday 10th

Lights to Remember 4pm.

Saturday 16th

Experience Christmas 10.30am to 4pm / Nine Lessons & Carols by Candlelight (followed by mulled wine) 4pm.

Sunday 17th

Experience Christmas 1pm to 4pm.

Sunday 24th

Crib Service (Living Nativity) 3pm

Midnight Mass 11pm.

Christmas Day

Contemplative Mass 10am

Everyone at Margam Abbey
wishes you
a Happy Christmas
and peaceful New Year.



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Challenging Assumptions

John Berry BEM

When running a Youth Centre for Kent County Council I was invited to participate in a Management Training Course run jointly by the Diocese of Chelmsford and the Tavistock Clinic.

The central message was: never act on your assumptions before challenging them.

This came home to me on a parish retreat several years ago at Llangasty. The priest leading the retreat had taken as his base the book 'The Return of the Prodigal Son : A Story of Homecoming' by Henri J. M. Nouwen. The book looks in great detail at Rembrandt's painting 'The Prodigal Son'.

At the first session we were all given a post card of the painting; I had a copy of the book with me and informed the group I had it if anybody wished to borrow it they were welcome to do so.

It was a very enjoyable few days and during the free time, if not out walking or talking with fellow retreatants, I had my head in a book.

On the penultimate day we were all asked to bring to the evening session a favourite quotation or one we had picked up during the time together. Comment was made of interest in what I would be presenting from my earnest reading throughout the time there.

When my turn came I quoted from the psalms. Somebody said they had expected me to add to the comments about the painting as presented by the Retreat Leader. I pointed out that nobody had asked what was I reading and held up my book about the love affairs and mistresses of John O' Groats!

A little light relief

A vicar wanted a framed text to hang in his church as a Christmas decoration. His wife went to London to order it, but on arrival at the shop discovered she had forgotten the words and the dimensions.

She texted her husband.

The reply came back:

"Unto us a child is born, six feet long and three feet wide."

Hot Air Balloons and Airships

Adrian Warner



Men have always tried to emulate the birds. Icarus is a great example, and many others have tried to put wings on themselves. It is a risky and dangerous thing to do and many a life has been suddenly curtailed in the quest. When science stepped in by showing that hot air is less dense and so rises, hot air balloons developed and though not flying like birds, at least rising from the ground. There is extensive information on the internet about the development and uses and accidents.

Fine, but then the quest widened to answer the need to go to distant places avoiding the difficulties of surface travel. Being wind blown in a hot-air balloon meant that you did not know where you might land, and modern pleasure balloons have a ground support team with a vehicle to recover the fabric (and burner which made the air hot) and the paying joy-riders. So bigger balloons were made which could support an engine with a propeller to drive the whole contraption in a chosen direction to a pre-planned destination. Hot air was not possible for these, so explosive hydrogen was used, and when this failed, non-flammable helium was substituted. It has almost the same lifting power. A public house in Cardiff is named after Ernest Willows who spent his life developing airships.

However the wind was often more powerful than the engine and Kitty Hawk was developed. In a century this has led to mass air travel but still man's urge to travel is not always satisfied. The moon has been trodden upon and the planets are awaiting our footprints. Pictures from far distant space are being sending back by exploratory craft.

Will it be possible to find, and then to 'emigrate' to, another bountiful earth and begin again to use up its resources before we have so depleted this one that the power will not be available to escape the mess we have made of this one? All these historical facts and modern ideas can be explored on the internet.



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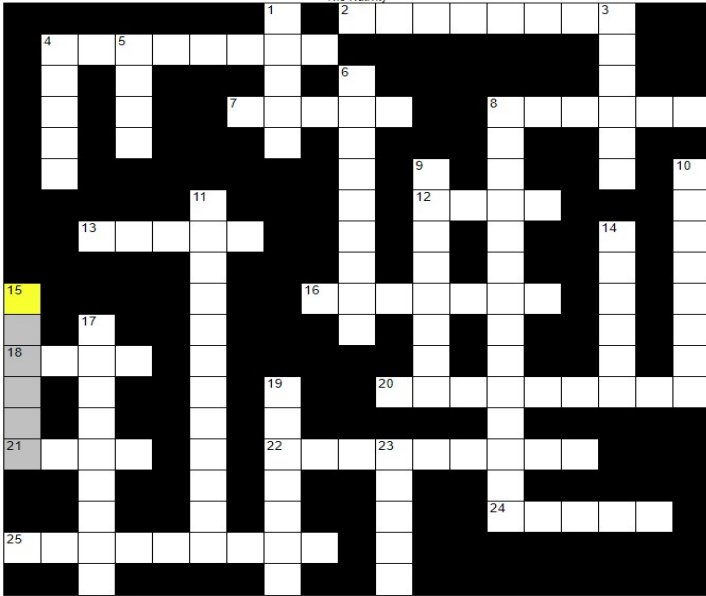
Day or Night

www.porthcawlfuneralservices.co.uk



Nativity Crossword

answers on page 33



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Across

- 2. Governor of Syria (8)
- 4. God with us (8)
- 7. This empire ruled the world (5)
- 8. Jesus' earthly father (6)
- 12. She saw Jesus in the temple (4)
- 13. A herb, one of the gifts (5)
- 16. Angel who visited Mary (7)
- 18. Metal, one of the gifts (4)
- 20. They watched over sheep (9)
- 21. It led the Wise Men (4)
- 22. Cloth used to wrap babies (9)
- 24. Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to pay these (5)
- 25. City where Jesus was born (9)

Down

- 1. King of Judea (5)
- 3. God promised him he wouldn't die before he saw Christ (6)
- 4. The Holy family went there after Bethlehem (5)
- 5. Mother of Jesus (4)
- 6. Father of John the Baptist (9)
- 8. He "prepared the way of the Lord" (14)
- 9. Where Jesus grew up (8)
- 10. Roman Emperor at the time (8)
- 11. Gum resin, one of the gifts (12)
- 14. A trough where cattle feed (6)
- 15. A multitude of these praised God (6)
- 17. Mary's cousin and mother of John the Baptist (9)
- 19. They came from the East with gifts (7)
- 23. Joseph & Mary were of the lineage of this former King of Israel (5)

Pause for Thought

It was Christmas Eve and the world stood still

It was Christmas Eve
And the world stood still
Just for a moment

Waiting
Wondering
Hoping

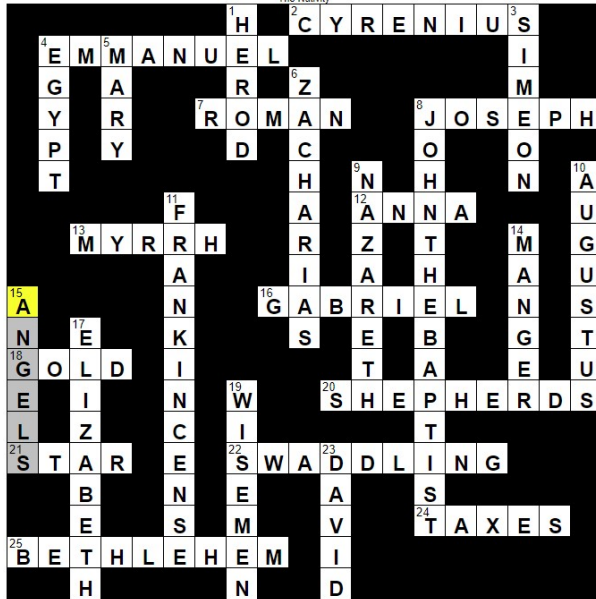
Might it be that this time
This time of all times
The promise would be fulfilled
And the wars would end
And the crying cease
And the people join hands in unity?

Waiting
Wondering
Hoping

Might it be this time
This time of all times?

A poem by Tim Carter

Nativity Crossword Answer (page 31)



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Saint Theodore, Kenfig Hill Mrs Margaret Phillips 07748 678827

Mrs Margaret Griffiths 07477 648871

Margam Abbey Mr Colin Gulley 07576 921005

Mrs Bev Gulley 07530 421220

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Parish Hall, Pyle Sue Roberts 01656 741030

All Saints Church, Porthcawl Judith Shawe 01656 786446

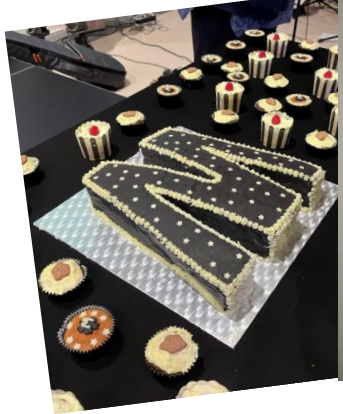
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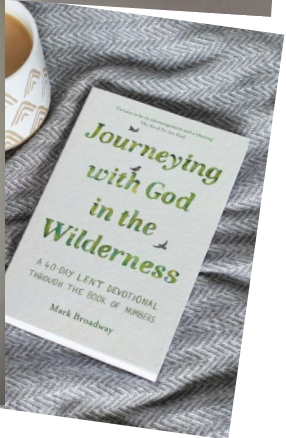
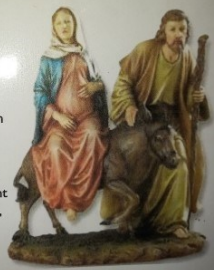
St Theodore's, Kenfig Hill sttheodoreskh@hotmail.com



You have guests!

Mary and Joseph are travelling round our parish family this December and are looking for an invitation to your home.

Can you host the Holy Family for just one night and then pass them on, with a prayer, to the next home?





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