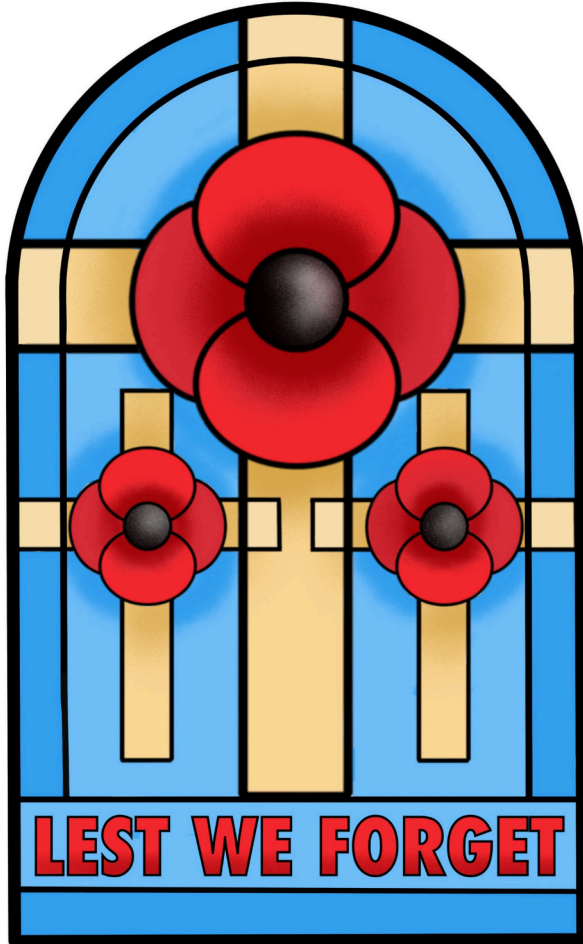




Highway



Number 388

November 2023

Free

<https://www.merthyrdfilministryarea.co.uk>

Dear Friends

Last year I missed the Diocesan Conference due to my brother-in-law, Julian, getting married to Mandy. Jayne, Esme and I thoroughly enjoyed the wedding, but I returned to find that the 13 deaneries had been turned into 6 super deaneries and various other changes had taken place that I had not really wanted. A year on and I am still asking what the purpose of the deanery is? It seemed to me that once the Ministry Areas had been created there was no purpose to the deanery structure. I still need convincing.

I made certain that I did not miss this year's Diocesan Conference, especially with our new Bishop, Bishop Mary, at the helm. It had been a delight to welcome Bishop Mary to Merthyr Tydfil a matter of days before the conference and although Bishop Mary was not unfamiliar with the area, she certainly asked some pertinent and penetrating questions. The Diocesan Conference takes place over two days. At the Thursday evening on 'Teams' we get the necessary reports and we heard that the Parish Share was, unfortunately, going to rise by 5%

in 2024. That is against a backdrop of a budget set by the diocese which is £1.1m in deficit. With only around £6m in reserve that cannot continue for much longer. We then moved to the in-person meeting on the Saturday. This year we were in St. Joseph's Comprehensive School in Port Talbot. The conference was very well arranged with easy to find directions and very good facilities. Perhaps the most important part of the conference is the Bishop's address. It was an address that acknowledged the incredible amount of change that the clergy and the Diocese had had to deal with and looked forward to a time of consolidation and growth. The Bishop shaped her address, which can be found on the diocesan website here,

<https://llandaff.contentfiles.net/media/documents/Presidential Address Diocesan Conference 2023.pdf>

on Prayer and our Christian Character. She identified a number of great initiatives across the diocese but had this to say to us all – lay and clergy alike:

'I am very aware that amongst all the great work there are also come considerable challenges. We probably all recognise that we have more church buildings than we can sensibly and responsibly use and repair. This is becoming increasingly apparent as cost-of-living pressures and our environmental understanding leads us to question how we use our buildings. We know that we need more, and younger vocations if we are to sustain a ministry that can realistically serve and grow the church. We also have a way to go to become a more financially viable diocese for present and future generations of disciples.'

The conference then concentrated on what the future might look like. There is huge agreement that if we were planning a way of spreading the Gospel starting with a blank canvas we would not organise a 'parish' system and locate our buildings where they are. The conference also looked at the way we are going to afford to move forward and laid out the ground that had so far been covered with the change to the way the parish share is going to be calculated. This is now expected, following consultation, to be implemented in 2025 rather than 2024. More of that later.

The Diocesan conference is followed by the Archdeacon's Visitation where the Ministry Areas from our Deanery, the Eglwysilan Deanery, all meet with the two Archdeacons and this year the day was split into 4 with the following headings for each. 1) Where have we got to? 2) Who do you need? 3) Where should we meet? 4) How do we pay for it? This conference was followed by a Ministry Area Leader's meeting where we meet as a more specific college to discuss particular issues raised by the two previous meetings.

Top of everyone's agenda was the 'How do we pay for it' with most really quite concerned about Ministry Area's (MA's) ability to pay. It seems that MAs are going to be asked to pay for the ministry they are receiving as clerics are by far the most expensive commodity. Account will be taken of various factors like deprivation but these have not been specified yet. It was clear, looking at the figures for giving, that Wales as a whole gives quite poorly and when you get to places like Merthyr Tydfil the giving levels are really low. I suspect we are battling on two fronts. One, historical, the church has appeared rich, and the other, the

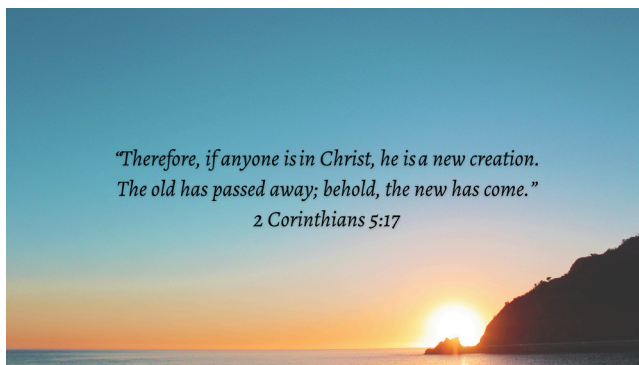
cost of living crisis, which bites deeply when the gap between required income and surplus income is small.

I have come away from this series of meetings convinced that, difficult though it is, we have to start thinking differently. If Bishop Mary got one message over to me it was that we are all in this together. Diocese, Ministry Area, Church! We have to have a completely different paradigm. You and I have been brought up thinking 'parish'. We knew the church, we knew the boundaries and we knew our focus. Now we have to think on a much larger scale. The scale of Ministry Area. We are in this Ministry Area to help and support one another, to find God's vision for the whole of this area not just our local church. We are not in competition! Realistically, on their own, none of

our churches are viable so we now need to think strategically so that we can hand something over having been good custodians and not those who simply said 'it will see me out!' I really pray that we can help one another to begin the process of thinking this way. The Bishop concluded her Presidential address with this prayer, I cannot improve:

'God who calls, help us to listen to your voice with open hearts and minds. May we always be ready to receive your love and forgiveness with humility and hope. Help us to recognise your presence in one another, so that together we may play our part in telling your joyful story, building your Kingdom and helping others to know your goodness and grace. We ask this in the name of Jesus our peace. Amen.'

Mark





St David's Cross for Remembrance.
Created by Katherine Brown using poppies made by
St David's Knit and Natter group.

Christmas Concert St David's Parish Church

30th November 2023 - 7pm

Compare - Huw Williams

Featuring - Ynysowen Male Voice Choir

Gwaunfarren Primary School Choir

Soloist - Bethan Davies

Tickets £7 available from Maria Thomas 07793650110
Lynda Price 07858487034 Dorothy Evans 07766240585

Also Raffle

All Proceeds In aid of St David's Parish Church Restoration

December Services in Christ Church Cyfarthfa

3rd December 11am Informal Communion Service
10th December 11am Worship Service
17th December 3pm Carol Service (no service at 11am)
24th December 4pm a Chaotic Christingle Service (no service at 11am)
25th December 10am Christmas Communion Service
31st December 11am Café Style Communion Service in the Church Hall

Christmas services in Ss Peter & Paul Abercanaid

Regular 9:30am Sunday services apply with the exception of the 24th
24th December Not-Quite-Midnight Communion Service 8pm
31st December Our Final Service in the Church... for now

From the Editor



This month marks a year since Highway extended its readership to the whole of the Merthyr Tydfil Ministry Area. Just a reminder of how to send content to us.

How to format your articles etc.

Most people tend to type on a sheet of A4 and format it carefully so it looks just right on their screen. Tidy. The trouble is I then have to make it fit onto a page or two of A5. So all your care and attention to formatting goes to waste. I just need the words and I'll do the rest. If you have pictures please send them as separate files, not as part of your text because that reduces the quality of the pictures and may make them unusable.

Don't worry about fonts. All articles will be translated into Calibri which is Highway's default font. I do this so that everything looks neat and tidy. I prefer files saved as Rich Text Format (.rtf) but I can cope with docx, which is what most people use. Basically, if it's digital I can deal with it. However...

... Posters and Adverts

If you have a poster or advert already designed, could you send it to me in PDF format please? They can go straight in to Highway without any further editing. That's the nice thing about PDF files. They look the same on any printed page or screen and at almost any size too!

Ta very much, Ken.

St David's Church CHRISTMAS FAYRE

SATURDAY, 18TH NOVEMBER 2023
11AM - 6PM



Meet Santa and his elves!
Post your letter in his red post box

Delicious refreshments, Cake stall, Bottle stall,
Crafts, Produce, Toys, Bric-a-Brac, Tombola

Games: Scoop the Snowball, Spin the Wheel, Twister

Christmas Raffle: £1 a ticket

1st Prize - Luxury Christmas Hamper
2nd Prize - £25 Marks & Spencer Voucher
3rd Prize - Cheese & Wine Gift Box

Proceeds to St David's Restoration Fund

It's time for a Macmillan Coffee Morning and you're invited

Let's do whatever it takes
to support people living with cancer.

Place: Christ Church, Merthyr Tydfil, Church Hall.
Date: 17th of November
Time: 10.30am 'til 4.00pm
Contact: Beth
Tel. 07807606873



Simply scan this QR code with your phone
to donate to your host's Coffee Morning.
It's easy, quick and secure. Thank you.



MACMILLAN
CANCER SUPPORT



COSTA
COFFEE



Macmillan Cancer Support: registered charity in England and Wales (10391), Scotland (SC03919) and the Isle of Man (366). Also operating in Northern Ireland: MACMILLAN (NI) Charity

Santa at St Tydfil's

St Tydfils Church
Saturday
9 December
11am - 3pm



FAMILY FUN DAY



St John the Baptist Church
Christmas Fayre
on 8th December 2023
Scout Hall, Bridge Street.
10.00am to 2.00pm

Cakes Preserves
White Elephant
Raffle Pound Stall
Refreshments Christmas Gifts



Church Upside Down

On the 22nd of October we had our second MA family's project 'Church Upside Down!' A small number of people poured in hundreds of hours over a month, preparing the props and decorations. However, in the days leading into it, things were looking rather grim; we had far fewer decorations than we had wanted, the only support had come from Cyfarthfa Church, leaving everyone feeling very tired and disillusioned. Then it got even worse when we looked at the signup list and found only 4 children registered. We wanted to just give up, were adamant that we were never doing this again!



Oh we have little faith! Our despair was uncalled for, because God was at work! Once all was set up, the church had been turned 'upside down', transformed into the garden of Eden and it looked awesome. It was a treat for the congregation when they came in Sunday morning and it generated a great sense of excitement and anticipation. Then in the half hour leading into the session helpers began pouring in. The atmosphere was of excitement, there was chatting and banter, as the final bits and pieces were got ready. Then 3 o'clock came, time to start and only one child turned up. Internally I started to panic! But a minute or so later another family turned up, then another, then another, then another. There were old friends and new faces among them! I counted 19 children, there were



MUSHROOM BOWLING

parents and grandparents, a huge team of helpers, along with Mark and Jayne who came to show their support. The session was run by my wife Patrycja, and Caitlin one of the family engagement worker for the diocese.

The children arrived to a time of 'Simon Says' exercises to help burn off excess energy, they were then led to sit around the tree in the centre of the garden as they watched a video of the first part of the creation story, followed by some teaching, a treasure hunt around the church and a game of charades - guess the animal, which was a great laugh. The cycle then repeated with a video and teaching, but this time with mushroom bowling and an opportunity to try all sorts of exotic fruits, some of which the adults had never tried either! We then repeated the cycle again and finished off with a song "who's the king of the jungle O O" and prayer.



The session lasted an hour and a half, and it was exhausting, and yet many of us finished with such a buzz of excitement.

What was really encouraging, was that it wasn't just the children who got something from it. The adults listened in and engaged with what was going on, and I hear those conversations continued in some of their homes in the days that followed. It was also

encouraging for the members of the church who were there, because it was a time full of joy, entertainment, and people were able to see fruit from our labours. As we left, Patrycja, who had planned, designed, and made manifest this event, despite being exhausted, was already making plans for the next event!

My biggest regret, is that the rest of the MA didn't get to share in the encouragement of this event. Which got me thinking: we are so busy trying to keep things going the way they always have in our churches, the same people doing most of the jobs, with so many people already at capacity, often doing jobs they don't really want to do, with no space to get involved in projects like this.



The positives of Ministry Areas, should be the opportunity to reduce the repetition in the day-to-day running of our churches and therefore the workload, and to be able to come together to run events like this, where we can combine our energy, do things really well, so that our guests look forward to our activities, and so we can be really encouraged and filled with joy in our work again and not fed up and discouraged as is so often the case.

If we are going to grow God's kingdom in this place, things need to change. We are going to need to let go of the old, and explore the new, and in doing so rediscover the joy of seeing God at work.

Marc-Ashton Walford



SWORDS INTO PLOUGHSHARES

The St David's Memorial Vase

What do you do with your weapons when a war ends? in biblical times they really did 'beat their swords into ploughshares', repurposing the precious bronze or iron into the blade that cuts through the soil.

Something useful out of an instrument of destruction. In St David's Church we have the modern equivalent.

A simple brass vase.

When it was found at the back of the Caretaker's cupboard it was very dirty and heavy. After cleaning it was found to be made of brass with the inscription



"In remembrance of those who have not returned and those who answered their country's call. After conflict comes peace. 1914-1918".

It was filled with poppies and placed on a shelf in the south aisle of St David's Church, next to the military standards. I showed it to two gentlemen at a Remembrance Day service and they explained it was made from a First World War artillery shell case, as the markings underneath show. It made me think of the words from Isaiah:-

Isaiah 2.4 (NRSV)

He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning-hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.

Liz Lewis



St TYDFIL'S CHURCH, Merthyr Tydfil

SUNDAY 11.00am Holy Eucharist

St DAVID'S CHURCH, Merthyr Tydfil

SUNDAY 9.30am Holy Eucharist

WEDNESDAY 10.30am Holy Eucharist

Ss PETER & PAUL'S CHURCH, Abercanaid

SUNDAY 9.30am Holy Eucharist

CHRIST CHURCH, Georgetown, Merthyr Tydfil

SUNDAY 11.00am Holy Eucharist

ALL SAINTS CHURCH, Dowlais

SUNDAY 11.00am Holy Eucharist

CHRISTCHURCH, Pant

SUNDAY 9.30am Holy Eucharist

WEDNESDAY 10.30am Holy Eucharist

ONLINE

SUNDAY 11.00am Dowlais & Pant Facebook and YouTube Service

St JOHN'S Troedryhiw

SUNDAY 11.00am Holy Communion

St MARY'S, Merthyr Vale

SUNDAY 9.30am Holy Communion

WEDNESDAY 10.15am Holy Communion

All services may be changed or added to especially on Saints' Days.

Please see the Ministry Area website for details

<https://www.merthyrtydfilministryarea.co.uk>



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01685 388805

(10.00–13.00, Mon, Tue & Thur)

The office e mail address is:- lyndaattheoffice@btinternet.com

The readings for next Sunday and various church news sheets can be seen and downloaded from the Publications page of the Ministry Area website at <https://www.merthytydfilministryarea.co.uk/publications>



QR Code for the
Ministry Area Website

Next issue

Please let me have anything for December 2023 by Sunday 26 November 2023. Preferably earlier.

Next issue is due out 3 December 2023

Please e-mail your articles to
kenlewis.merthytydfil.church@gmail.com

All named articles are the work of that person. Publication does not imply agreement with the opinions expressed. Ken Lewis, Editor.