

*The Diocese of Swansea and Brecon*



**THE NEWSLETTER FOR RETIRED CLERGY AND THEIR FAMILIES.**

**No. 101**

**AUTUMN 2023**



**From the Editor: Chancellor Brian H. Jones**

**Dear Friends,**

***In the year of your Jubilee go back to the Rock from which you were hewn***’ the instructions to the Israelites as to how they should celebrate the Jubilee every fifty years. Go back to Abraham and his Covenant with God ‘*you will be my people and I will be your God*’ The Jubilee a time of celebration and thanksgiving for the nation.

It was to be a Sabbatical year a time of rest and reflection, of reassessment of their situation, a time of worship and renewal. It was also a time for looking to the needs of the world, to those in need and poverty, a time for outreach to the world outside. In fact a period of socio-economic activity based on the faith of their ancestors and the teaching of the Deuteronomic writer.

St Paul takes up the theme in the first letter to the Corinthians. He talks of the Rock that was the source of faith for the Israelite Wilderness Wanderings how they were nurtured and fed and led to freedom. Paul goes on to say that the Rock was Christ and for the infant Church He is the source of their faith, has brought them to freedom and nurtures them. As a diocese we are now in the year of our Jubilee a time for returning to the Rock from which we were hewn.



I cannot imagine what it must have been like in the days following the enthronement of Bishop Bevan, the list of priorities must have been horrendous. The raising of the status of the priory church of St. John the Evangelist to the Cathedral of the new diocese. Bevan had appointed himself as Dean with a sub-dean and together they set up the Cathedral Chapter,

Alongside that was the setting up the offices and officers for the new Diocese Boards of Finance, Education, and all the other committees and chairpersons. On a larger scale it was similar to the current situation of the Ministry Area leaders setting up their administration. With hindsight we see the birth of a vigorous new diocese that built up its own traditions of worship, service and outreach. We bring the events of the past in to the present and use them as a springboard for the future. A time for celebration for all that the Church in the diocese has meant to generations. We thank God for the faithful ministries of Bishops and Clergy over the century and for the worshipping communities of lay people who have made their own contribution to the life of the church

***With best wishes for our Celebration***

***Brian***

# FAMILY NEWS



## *Lambeth Awards – the Cross of St. Augustine*

Included in the recent Lambeth Awards was Canon Huw Thomas *'for services to the Anglican Communion'* Huw was ordained in the diocese, and after his title in Oystermouth was appointed Canon Treasurer in Liverpool Cathedral. He then joined USPG and went to Addis Ababa and worked with Sudanese refugees' establishing churches later Provost of the Cathedral in Cairo before his final appointment as Principal of St. Edward's College in Peshawar. In retirement he is House for Duty in Overton St. Helens in the Diocese of Blackburn. We send him our congratulations and prayers for his continuing ministry. *Ed.*

## *New Appointments*

Mandy Bayton has been appointed Provincial Director for Mission and Evangelism: The Rev. Gaynor Jones-Higgs Anglican Chaplain in the Swansea University Chaplaincy. We wish them both well in their new areas of ministry.

## *We send our good wishes and prayers to those who are unwell at the moment.*

- Michael Short has now left hospital and is settling in a Residential Home in Abercynon. Douglas and Pat Davies have both been in Respite Care in Sketty, Pat then went into hospital. Douglas is now at home, Pat is still in hospital but is making progress as is Judith Phillips. (It is important to say that this was the latest situation at the point of preparing The Newsletter. *(Ed.)*)
- *We are always glad to have the names of those who are unwell so that we can include them in our Intercession lists.*

## *The Retired Clergy Group*

We have decided for us to meet again this session on the second Tuesday of every month in St. James beginning in October.

On September 7<sup>th</sup> the Dean has invited all the Retired Clergy to a Eucharist and lunch in the Cathedral. Invitations are already in the post we include a copy below:

## Invitation to Brecon Cathedral

Thursday 07 September 2023

Eucharist at 12.30 pm followed by a light lunch.

The Dean and Chapter would like to share in worship and fellowship with retired priests, partners/wives/husbands, giving thanks for your faithful ministry and support to the Diocese of Swansea & Brecon, and the Cathedral Church in this our centenary year.

If you would like to attend you can contact us through the following:

**Email:** [admin@breconcathedral.org.uk](mailto:admin@breconcathedral.org.uk) or;

**Letter:** Envelope marked 'Retired Eucharist/Lunch' to The Cathedral Office, Cathedral Close, Brecon, LD3 9DP or;

**Phone:** Leave a message on the Cathedral answerphone: 01874 623857

I look forward to sharing in the occasion with you, and if you are unable to attend, be assured of our continued prayers and thanks at Brecon Cathedral for your faithful ministry.

With sincere best wishes and prayers,

## *Centenary Celebrations in the Cathedral*

**Thursday 14 September** from 2pm. Three-hour peal of bells at the Cathedral by Swansea & Brecon Guild of Bellringers

**Thursday 14 September** 7pm Lecture in the Cathedral by Rowan Williams, *Welsh Cathedrals: Past and Present*. Wide enough title for him to 'play with'. This will be followed by a drink's reception in the Cathedral.

**Saturday 16 September** all day: Medieval Festival. A family day in the Close, children's soft play area, medieval re-enactment (Professionals), medieval costumes, stalls, food, music etc.

**Sunday 17 September** 3.30pm Choral Evensong with orchestra and choir. Bishop present.

## *Centenary Thoughts*

It's worthwhile examining the extent of the achievement of creating a new diocese in Wales in 1923. We can only appreciate the enormity of the challenge if we look at the background national and international, social and economic. A phrase from our Biblical criticism lectures in theological college comes to mind --Sitz im Leben-- the setting in actual life in which the Diocese of Swansea and Brecon was born.

To adapt the famous comment by the Irishman, "I wouldn't be starting a diocese from here" In 1923 Britain was broke. The First World War had shattered the prosperity of the Edwardian period and emptied the national coffers, The economic problems which were to dog twentieth century Wales were beginning to emerge. The steel and coal industries were beginning a long period of decline which would create massive unemployment. Meanwhile agriculture was no longer as profitable as in prewar days and the spread of mechanisation reduced the number of workers employed on the land.

Meanwhile a feeling of disillusionment and cynicism gripped many people. The harrowing experience of war left many ex-servicemen with honest doubt about the existence of God if not flat disbelief. "Atheism tempered by hymns" was Bernard Shaw's damning description of the religious atmosphere in Britain.

Many commentators noted that fewer people went to church than before the war. The younger generation, as in every age, were accused of frivolity and indulging in a mindless cycle of dancing, partying and outrageous fashions.

How did the church respond to the challenges of the postwar landscape? The church leaders who grabbed the attention of the newspapers were usually those who condemned the follies of the era. Short skirts, night clubs and dances to raise money for war memorials were condemned. The advent of wireless broadcasting was regarded with anxiety by some. Eventually the newly fledged BBC was to broadcast a daily service and John Reith the Director General declared that

"Christianity happens to be the stated and official religion of this country"

Within the Anglican church countless parish priests ministered to the victims of war and deprivation. The death toll of the Great War led to pressure on the church to meet the needs of the bereaved in sensitive ways. Prayer for the departed and the evolving rituals of Remembrance Sunday were the result. The ferment Prayer Book. The desire of many for change was to be thwarted by parliament. A painstaking revision, approved by most bishops, clergy and members of the Church Assembly was thrown out by both houses of parliament.

Meanwhile over Offa's Dyke the newly disestablished Church in Wales enjoyed the freedom to revise its liturgy without interference by outside bodies. It was a bold and brave decision in the light of this turbulent background that the new diocese of Swansea and Brecon was created. Despite all the difficulties of the times, the project went ahead. We can only admire the devotion and enthusiasm of the church people of the time. A new chapter in the history of the church was [begun.to](#) which many of those reading this article will have made substantial contributions. In 1923 the courage and conviction were found to do something new to the glory of God, We pray that we, in our very different era, may share the same courage and conviction.

*George Bennett*

### **Rural Ministry.**



*Millet The Angelus*

Those of us who lived and worked for over fifty years in the rural parishes of the diocese have witnessed great changes in the role played by



clergy and other community leaders. In the early years of our diocese's history most country parishes had a village policeman, postman, schoolmaster, doctor, district nurse, blacksmith, publican, clergyman and minister – all living in the community, knowing and known by every resident. It is not an exaggeration to say that today very few communities in Brecon and Radnor can lay claim to have even one of those named above living and working in their midst. The change has been dramatic. We have seen the closure of village post offices, police stations, schools (31 primary schools have been closed in Radnorshire since the last war) as well as a major reduction in the number of stipendiary clergy. Sixty years ago there were over 75 clergy serving in the archdeaconry of Brecon many spending long incumbencies in small rural parishes where they were recognised as an essential part of the community.

What did they do? They maintained weekday and Sunday worship in every parish church, visited and befriended every parishioner, administered the sacrament of Baptism to many children, assisted in the instruction of children in schools and prepared children for confirmation, administered the sacrament of marriage, visited and brought the sacrament to the sick, supported the dying and bereaved and conducted the burial office. The care of church buildings, churchyards and church property was primarily their responsibility. They led or supervised the work of all church organisations in the parish as well as playing a leading role in every social activity in the community. They produced a parish magazine and in many country parishes supervised financial matters and organised fund raising. Many took very few days off work and, like the country doctor and many others, were always on call. It was often difficult to arrange holiday cover so many took few holidays and if they did these were often locum exchanges with other clerics. Compulsory retirement was a novelty and most remained active and lived to a ripe old age!

What is also remarkable is that many country clergy found time and energy to engage in other pursuits over and above their clerical duties. Many served on parish, district or county councils,

acted as officials of local agricultural shows, were involved in the leadership of young farmers' clubs or organised village football teams. The Vicar or the schoolmaster was expected to be the secretary when a committee was formed to organise any local celebration. Most clergy found time to maintain a large and productive garden and some farmed the glebe land attached to their vicarages.

Other clergy developed special interests or engaged in serious study. There are far too many books written by country parsons but some clergy produced works of quality. Among these are, for example, Daniel Parry-Jones (Llanfihangel Rhydithon/Gilwern) who wrote "Welsh Country Upbringing" and "Welsh Country Characters". Important historical works were produced by Owain Jones (Builth/Newbridge), Roy Fenn (Glascwm), Thornley Jones (Cwmdeuddwr), David Davies (Llanwrtyd) and many others.

While these secular activities are now being continued by others the fundamental work of the country parson is now often left undone. The challenge we face as a Church is to support and encourage a small body of faithful and effective Christian people who will continue the spiritual and pastoral work formerly undertaken by the country parson – maintaining regular Christian worship, caring for people who need support and being the visible Church in every country parish community.

*Geraint Hughes*

*J.C.A*

### *Junior Clergy Association Clergy Association*

I was ordained in Brecon Cathedral in 1954 and served three different curacies in Swansea over the following nine years. From the very beginning I joined the Junior Clergy Association. At the time there were about twelve curates (later in the sixties up to 26 in the Diocese), but our meetings were augmented by senior clergy who came along as guests. This meant that on average our attendance was about twenty-five which made it possible for us to invite some impressive figures to address our meetings. One such figure was the

Professor of English from the University and he spoke to us about the compiling of the Oxford English Dictionary. I remember his concluding comments, which he uttered with a broad smile *'it is important that you get to know a little about a great deal, as well as knowing a great deal about very little.'*

At our meetings the junior and senior clergy mixed happily together, conversations flowed, during which young and old were enriched and valuable folklore passed on. Preachers for Harvest Festivals Patronal Festivals and Good Friday Meditations were arranged and various vacancies discussed.

The Diocese of Swansea and Brecon is divided into two Archdeaconries, the northern and the southern. With very few exceptions, a curate would not be given the responsibility of becoming a vicar in the southern Archdeaconry, until he had proved his ability in the north and since many of the northern parishes were extremely rural and sparsely populated, with large, cold vicarages and distant schools, they were referred to as first livings. Second livings were usually those with reasonable populations and third livings were for those with proven ability in their previous appointments.

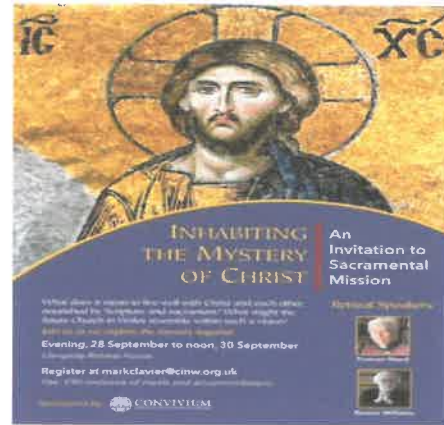
The star of these gatherings was the Rural Dean, Canon Thomas, A big heavy built man, the son of a Carmarthenshire farmer, who spoke English with a pronounced Welsh Accent. Who occasionally reminded us that he had played prop-forward for Llanelli. He was held in affection by all. I can remember him coming to my theological college and addressing us 'on being a clergyman' concluding with the advice *'don't marry anyone for money but for goodness sake don't marry anyone without it.'*

Eventually my time as a curate came to a close and the inevitable letter came from the Bishop informing me that a parish was becoming vacant (a first parish) in the northern Archdeaconry, and would I like to go and see it and let him know my thoughts on the matter? My wife and I visited the parish and we were made welcome by the outgoing vicar and his wife. The setting was beautiful, the vicarage was huge and the school

was miles away. I replied to the Bishop and declined his offer. In due course I received an offer from an English bishop and reluctantly departed to a parish in the Vale of Evesham.

**Ron Lloyd.**

## CONFERENCE



There is a growing need in Wales for the revival of an Anglican approach to ministry that is deeply and visibly Sacramental while also rooted firmly in the serious study and proclamation of the Word; a need for an approach to mission that invites others to inhabit God's strange new world and can manifest that world in the beauty of our liturgy, the teaching of our faith, and a love that builds up our local churches into gateways of God's Kingdom. To start that sacramental revival, we will gather at Llangasty Retreat House on 28-30 September to pray, worship, learn, and discuss how we can work together to breathe renewing life into the sacramental ministry of the Church in Wales.

We will be joined by the Rt Revd and Rt Hon. Dr Rowan Williams and Very Revd Frances Ward, who will guide us with a series of talks on 'Inhabiting the Mystery of Christ: An Invitation to Sacramental Mission'. Both laypeople and clergy in Wales are welcome. Spaces are very limited, so book right away

**Mark Clavier**

## THE MITRE



In July this year the Archdeaconry of Gower Mothers' Union held a successful Flower Festival to commemorate the centenary of the Diocese of Swansea & Brecon at St Mary's, Swansea. I was grateful to Dean Shackerley for allowing me to display the first Diocesan Cope and Mitre.

On 27<sup>th</sup> May 1924 nearly 2,000 women from all parts of the diocese—including 800 from the then East Gower Deanery assembled at Brecon Cathedral for the annual festival of the Mothers' Union branches and presented a mitre to the new diocesan. The presentation took place at Ely Tower an hour before the service. Bishop Edward Latham Bevan received it from Mrs Frank Dickinson, of Aberyscir Court (M.U. Diocesan President), who was accompanied by Mrs Simon, St. David's, Brecon (Diocesan Secretary and mother of the future Bishop of Swansea & Brecon, Glyn Simon). With the Bishop was Mrs Lewis Davies (his sister). In making the presentation Mrs Dickinson said it was a mark of their loyalty and of their gratitude for the great work the bishop had done amongst them.

The costly mitre was subscribed for by members and associates of the Mothers' Union and made at the Royal School of Needlework. The cost equivalent today would be nearly £2,500.

The mitre was presented in conjunction with the 'Hereford' Cope which was donated by the Hon Mrs R C Devereux of Tregoyd and also made at the Royal School of Needlework. They were to be used at great ceremonial occasions and were still in use until 1983.



The Hereford cope features symbols of St John the [Evangelist](#), [the dedication of the cathedral at Brecon](#); the Diocesan Coat of Arms granted in February 1924; the ancient arms attributed to Bernard de Neufmarché the first Norman Conqueror of Wales, who out of the ruins of the Welsh Kingdom created the Anglo-Norman lordship of Brecon and built the castle at

Brecon, and the arms indicating different titles that form part of the Devereux family dynasty, Viscount Hereford, Baron Bouchier (a title in abeyance), and the Earls of Essex, along with the arms of Edward III

*Paul Murray.*

### *The Big Bike Ride 4 Palestine*

This is an event set up in 2015. The organisers combine their love of cycling with practical solidarity and awareness raising about the military occupation of Palestine, the human rights abuses and the Israeli apartheid against the Palestinians. They raise funds each year for charities working with children and para-cyclists in Palestine. They had raised around £400,000 before this year, and have so far raised over £65,000 for specific Charities. These are the Middle East Children's Alliance which runs projects and activities for children in Palestinian Refugee Camps and 'Sunbirds' which is a charity supported by the Amos Trust giving help to para-cyclists in Gaza

This year the BigBikeRide started in Swansea on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, arriving in Cardiff that night, Newport the next night and arriving in Bristol the night after that ready for a celebratory circuit of Bristol on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> August. We received the cyclists on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> August evening at Christchurch for registration, dinner and some sleeping. Being opposite the Civic centre where they set out from the next morning it was perfect. We were a multi-and-no-faith group who came together to help the organisers. We had in common our support for the plight of the Palestinians.

Father Mark Griffiths and I are involved in the Swansea and Gower Sabeel-Kairos group and we sorted out accommodation - Christchurch was excellent for the Welcome dinner for 220 cyclists and floor space for 30 women cyclists, while St Gabriel's, Brynmill provided bed/floor space and breakfast for 20+ men cyclists.

Dawn Morgan and friends from the Mormon church were washers-up extraordinaire and other non-church supporters laid on a fund raising gig that evening! The Muslim community organised by Dr Saad al Ismail provided a wonderful dinner



for absolutely everyone -220 people! - cooked by the famous Goggi's!



**TheBigBikeRide** is an event set up in 2015. The organisers combine their love of cycling with practical solidarity and awareness raising about the military occupation of Palestine, the human rights abuses and the Israeli apartheid against the Palestinians. They raise funds each year for charities working with children and para-cyclists in Palestine.

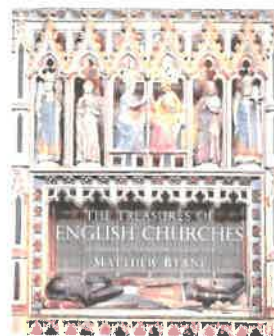


They had raised around £400,000 before this year and have so far raised over £65,000 this year. It was a great privilege being part of it, even in our tiny way - and very enjoyable. It has been very good for us to work alongside others from other faith groups, and they have all expressed an interest in us working together here in Swansea in future, for the Palestinians. In their thank you email, the organisers particularly commented on how thrilled the cyclists were to see such inter-faith support. Some young Muslims and Jews commented on the notices about Palestine at St Gabriel's.

The Big Ride was trying to raise funds this year for the children of Gaza, 'the largest outdoor prison in the world'. If any of you would be kind enough to support them, please go to the [BigBikeRide4Palestine.com](http://BigBikeRide4Palestine.com) for more details.

*April Beynon*

### *The Treasures of English Churches*

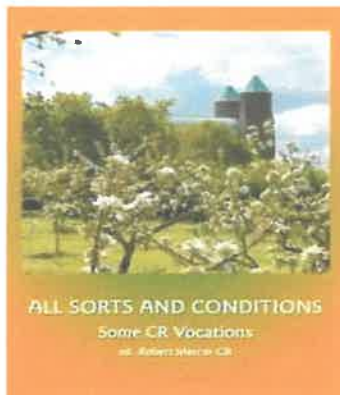


Matthew Byrne's knowledge of English churches is unmatched. With simple, descriptive and concise prose, he examines a diverse set of treasures contained within some of the largest and most spectacular, as well as the most remote and seemingly removed churches in the country. He writes that "those who have explored English churches have explored England, its landscapes, art, architecture and the history of its people". Byrne explains how English churches have developed such an enduring appeal spiritually, socially and artistically.

He details the revolutionary efforts of Abbot Suger (1081-1151), who knew of the importance of stained-glass windows in creating an atmosphere of transcendent radiance and holiness but also in communicating Bible stories to the masses, who were largely illiterate at the time. Byrne manages to prompt the reader into re-evaluating every single aspect of English churches – everything from the placement of the rows speaking volumes about Victorian class dynamics to the presence of Celtic-style crosses making you consider early Anglo-Celtic relations.

As he states in his introduction, this title attempts a less specialised look at the treasures of English churches ,

## All Sorts and Conditions



The Editor Fr. Robert Mercer C.R. says in the Introduction that all members of the Community have, at some point been asked how did you get here? The answer is in the call of Go, as in the case of Jeremiah and Moses 'I have called you by name, you are mine.'

At the General Chapter in July 2022 members of the Chapter were invited to write their own story, the book is the result of the invitations. Those who were unable to do so provided instead a more general piece on Vocation, so that the whole of the Community is represented in the pages. At the end of each story there is a summary of what their role in the Community has been apart from preaching, conducting Retreats, the sharing in the events of Holy Week, the involvement day by day in Community worship and the daily routine of work in which all are involved.

From their stories the background and opportunities of their early lives varies in a number of ways – some from single parent families and a deprived upbringings with little connection with the church. Others with a background of private education and comfortable family backgrounds. But what is common to all of them, is the constant call of God with which each of them wrestles until the final commitment to the religious life.

If I can just pick out a couple of examples most recent

to join the community, as a Novice nine months ago is Fr. Jude C.R., an actor who responded to the call and went through the long process of education from G.C.S.E and University to training and Ordination. Fr. Oswin the Superior, went with C,M,S to study religious life in Japan where he wrestled with the call to the religious life. Two of his mentors were Br.

Ramon S.S.F born in Swansea and Br. Nathanael S.S.F for a time curate of St. Gabriel's. Fr. Oswin went on to University and Ordination and after a curacy joined the Community. In addition Fr. Stebbins a Rhodesian who trained for Ordination in the Community of the resurrection in South Africa.

I found the whole experience of reading 'All Sorts and Conditions' fascinating and illuminating, helped by the fact that we are familiar with members of the Community as Mark our son-in-law is Principal of the College of the Resurrection. Recommended reading and available from the Mirfield Bookshop. *Ed.*

### Clergy Support Trust Library

Download as many books as you want. New SPCK, IVP and Apollos titles will be added as and when they are published. Notable authors include: Tom Wright - Kenneth Bailey= Richard Rohr - Rowan Williams

All Anglican ordinands and curates (Initial Ministerial Education Phase 2 - IME2) in the UK and Ireland are being offered FREE access to a Library website and apps sponsored by Clergy Support Trust. A partnership with S.P.C.K. and Inter-Varsity Press in the UK, the Library covers over 1,300 titles in e-book format from the SPCK/IVP catalogue of theological resources and other Christian books.

It might be helpful to pass this on to any aspiring ordinands or recently ordained curates in our Ministry Areas. For further information Google [Clergy Support trust Library](#). *Ed.*

**Our Contributors** Once again my thanks to our contributors, some for the first time, I really appreciate your contributions. *Ed.*

#### Retired Clergy Newsletter

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**Please send suggestions, comments, items of news by December 1<sup>st</sup> for the Christmas issue.**