

The Diocese of Swansea and Brecon



No. 90

Christmas 2020



From the Editor: Chancellor Brian H. Jones

My Dear Friends,

As we approach Christmas, we do so with a great deal of uncertainty. Not as some have said that it will be postponed but it will be an experience of celebration that we have not had previously. Writing, as I am on December 1st we know that there will be a five day relaxation of restrictions. But there are Tiers leading up to the relaxations that will control many people's movements.

There will also be tears from many of those who are separated from their families, who live elsewhere in the United Kingdom. ZOOM has become part of our every day experience in the past months, and that will give us opportunity to at least see family members.

Where our Christmas worship is concerned, there is opportunity for us to come together in limited numbers which are controlled by social distancing and other safety issues. Parish clergy are making huge efforts to accommodate as many people as their churches will allow and we thank them for it. We are grateful for that what is streamed on line.

As we reflect on the coming of the Christ-Child the contemporary world in Bethlehem was also in lockdown. The Roman occupation brought its own problems, not least the need for a census which meant that people had to travel to register. King Herod was obsessed with the prophets' message of the coming of a new kingdom. Maybe, like us people were immersed in a variety of restrictions that occupied their time.



The first to know of the arrival of the Child were the Shepherds, who by the very nature of their occupation were in lockdown, unable to fulfil their religious obligations as required in the Law of Moses. Yet

***When came in flesh th' Incarnate Word
The heedless world slept on
And only simple shepherds heard
That God had sent his Son.***

Wishing you all the Joy and Peace of Christmas

Brian

FAMILY NEWS

We send our congratulations and best wishes to:

- **Phyllis Davies who celebrates her 100th birthday on December 1st.**
- **Archbishop John and Jo on the arrival of their grandson**
- **Ian Davies on his retirement**
- **Philip David who moves to his new home in Penarth to be nearer his daughter**
- **Barbara Hodgson who has moved to Kirkbymoorside, York to be near her family**

We send our good wishes and prayers to those who have not been well:

- **Monica Jones and Ron Lloyd have both been in hospital recently.**
- **Lionel Hopkins as he continues his hospital treatment and his wife Linda**
- **All who are shielded from the Corona Virus and are limited in their movements and being able to see family and friends.**

In Memoriam Mair Mosford

My dear friend Mair Mosford died peacefully on September 25th after a long illness. She was the widow of Denzil Mosford and a devoted mother of Huw, Aled and Sian and a loving grandmother and great grandmother.

During Denzil's ministry she supported him faithfully while continuing her own profession teaching Welsh at Dumbarton School.

When Denzil retired they attended Penllergaer Church where she was a faithful member of the Mothers' Union. We enjoyed a happy social life together but Covid resulted in us both shielding so that meeting up was impossible. I shall miss Mair dearly – a good and faithful friend.

Betty Evans

In Memoriam David Watkins, Priest



A service of thanksgiving for David's life and ministry was held at All Saints', Oystermouth, on the 13th November, where he had served as Assistant Curate for thirty years.

David retired from active ministry at Easter. He was made Deacon in 1990 and ordained Priest a year later, one of the first 'Non Stipendiary Ministers' in the diocese. He often spoke about growing up in the close knit community of Cwmrhydyceirw, near Morriston, where Welsh was the language of home and Chapel! When it came to David's ministry as an Anglican priest many of us would say that, 'though you could take the man out of the Welsh Baptist Chapel you couldn't take the Welsh Baptist out of the man!'

David trained as a teacher at Trinity College, Carmarthen, and taught at Penlan Boys' Comprehensive School and later at Mynyddbach Girls' School. Much of his career was spent teaching pupils with special needs and he eventually became a Deputy Head.

As well as holding down his teaching day job David also ran the Stadwen Youth Club at Llansamlet for a number of decades. For well over ten years he chaired ACTS [Action of Christians Together in Swansea] and oversaw the Soup Run and Night Shelter in the Strand run by local Churches during the cold winter months.!

But it is the people of Oystermouth who have benefited most from his unique style of ministry over twenty years. He played a full part in the life of the parish, presiding at many of the daily and Sunday celebrations of the Holy Eucharist, overseeing Norton Mission, visiting the sick, taking the sacrament to the housebound, conducting funerals and ministering to the bereaved. Throughout his ministry he was supported by Merlys, who served as parish administrator and PCC secretary for well over twenty years. We send our sympathy and prayers to his family and friends and commend him to the care and mercy of God.

Keith Evans

HOPE FOR THE WORLD



There's a baby born in the barn tonight
The Child is the hope of the world.
They will number the years from this birth tonight
For the Child is the hope of the world.

My master Augustus will sicken and die
And Herod grow cold in his grave
But the Child who is born has a reign without end
A kingdom to shatter the strong

The hope that He brings will not waver or fade
When He speaks the wise ones will tremble
He brings diagnosis for all our ills
With a medicine bitter yet tender

For the Child born tonight, the hope of the world,
Will grow to be tall and slender
He will work for His living and speak out for truth
With words that endure forever.

He will suffer no truce with the evil or bad
He will make the respectable shiver;
He will talk long of love, and live out that love
And talk loud of justice, and show it.

There's hope for the world because of this Child
For His Spirit will cleanse and renew us,
Unlocking within us the gifts we've forgot,
The potential and promise of glory.

To clear from the earth all injustice and wrong,
To unfurl the banner of Truth
A world where the weak are helped by the strong
And the aged find support from the youth.

So bring in your kingdom, dear Child in the barn!
May your hope burn in everyone's heart
For peace on the earth and health for our world
In that may we all play our part.

George Bennett

Christmas in a time of crisis.

Whatever restrictions are in force by December 25th, Christmas will come as it always does, and the meaning of Christmas will not change. At our age Christmas would have been gentle anyway. Gone are the days when we were in active ministry when Advent and Christmas were nearly as busy as Lent and Easter. Parish clergy today face the almost impossible task of leading a Church in lock-down and we should spare a thought for them as they struggle to maintain the Christian mission at such a difficult time. We, the Church at Prayer, have a more important task than ever at present.

It is not easy to anticipate what will be different this year. We are accustomed to change and during our lifetime we have seen many Christmas traditions come and go. I have been looking through old Service Registers for two small Radnorshire churches which record a period of over a century. Looking at Christmas observation it is surprising how recently many of the traditions with which we are now accustomed came into common use. Advent was different because nothing happened, no pre-Christmas events of any kind. Advent was kept as strictly as Lent. No carols until Christmas morning, no flowers or decorations of any sort until Christmas Day, no mention of Advent candles here until the 1970s. It is clear that Christmas trees were no part of the tradition in the church itself until as late as the 1960s and Christmas lights came even later. In the early period decoration was limited to holly, ivy and evergreens with no mention even of flowers before the 1930s. No one in a country parish would have thought of buying flowers at this time of the year.

As far as our country churches were concerned the Christmas celebration was confined to Holy Communion early on Christmas morning (including the singing of the hymn: 'Christians awake, salute the happy morn'), sung Morning Prayer with the Te Deum followed by Holy Communion at 11 a.m. and Evensong at 6 p.m. with the few Christmas hymns in Hymns Ancient & Modern sung as carols. I can remember that Evensong on Christmas Day was special because we were spared a sermon and sang an extra carol after the set prayers instead. As early as 1928 the collection on Christmas Day evening was given to the Diocesan Orphanage, in 1940 this changed to 'Air Raid Victims' and reverted in 1944 and in subsequent years to 'The Waifs and Strays Society'. Services of Carols and Readings are not mentioned here until 1953. It would appear that in our smaller country churches the Saints' Days following Christmas Day were not observed with church services.

The first service for children at Christmas is mentioned in 1940 and in 1943 there was a 'Nativity Play' on the Sunday after Christmas presented by the GFS. By 1974 this Children's Christmas Service had moved to the

Sunday before Christmas and it is clear from the way this was introduced in the parish magazine that this was a significant change. A Christingle Service in church is not mentioned here until 1997. It is not certain when a Christmas Crib first appeared in church as it is not mentioned until very recently.

Our local chapels marked Christmas with a Sacred Concert on Boxing Day or on one of the next few days. These were crowded events and visitors came from miles around. The annual Boxing Day Concert in Penybont Chapel had been held each year since 1880 and could be a lively evening. The chairman at one concert complimented the audience on *'so willingly obeying his appeal for perfect order'*. A press report tells us that the programme *'contained some things that provoked a little innocent mirth, yet the balance was well kept and the recitations had an excellent moral tendency'*.

The same might not always have been said of the annual Boxing Day Hunt which gathered at the Severn Arms attracting a huge crowd of followers and was for many the highlight of the festival. Two or three hundred people of all ages came to see the hounds leave and many followed on foot returning to the Inn later in the day to relate their adventures. A former landlord says *'Boxing Day was the busiest and the noisiest evening of the year'*.

Not to be outdone, at Llandegley Church 'the choir, churchwardens, sidesmen and other Church workers were entertained to an excellent supper in the schoolroom. The room was tastefully decorated and after supper various games were indulged in till 10.30 a.m. when light refreshments were served. The singing of the National Anthem brought a most enjoyable evening to a close'. We know how to enjoy ourselves in Radnorshire.

Geraint Hughes



Two or three things I know for sure, and one of them is that to go on living I have to tell stories, that stories are the one sure way I know to touch the heart and change the world.'

(Dorothy Allison)

Do you have a story of your journey of faith in lockdown, your experiences this year without physical worship? What has sustained and changed you? What have you come to value the most that you did not value previously? What have you come

to appreciate and value about the Church during isolation? We should collate our experiences and tell our stories for future generations to read, but also to share with each other. I am confident they will be an immeasurable source of data about what life has been like for Christians this year. 'Why was Solomon recognized as the wisest man in the world? Because he knew more stories than anyone else.' (Alan Kay, Vice President, Walt Disney).

In this article I hope to share something of the Cathedral story with you. Sunday 19 July was a very memorable and moving day for Cathedral clergy. I was the first to preside at the Eucharist since lockdown began in March. The Cathedral opened for worship for the congregation to gather. To preside at the Eucharist and preach with a congregation present brought tears to my eyes and joy to my heart. How we have all missed this union with God's people by sharing physically in fellowship in the Eucharist. I think congregations will emerge from all this quite different to when we began, as new people come, some from churches that may never reopen. Weeks turned into months and Zoom, and social media fatigue settled in our lives. Since March, priests and Bishops have responded and reacted in patchwork fashion within official guidelines from governments. During this time many have asked me frequently, when can we return to worship in the Cathedral? When can the choirs return? There has been an aching passion for us all to return to worship together physically. At last, the choirs returned to the Cathedral on Sunday 22nd November. Another deeply moving occasion. Planning for Advent and Christmas have taken place among the priests and musicians since October. And, given the uncertainty, musicians have been recording music in preparation for Epiphany, Baptism of Christ, Ash Wednesday, and Lent. Who knows when we will return to life as we knew it? We use the Advent season to 'prepare'.

No doubt we have all wondered, as autumn has given birth to winter, what kind of darkness will fall on us in the winter months. What will our lifestyle be? What practical pattern of enacted hope will be required of us? In November, the Church invited us to remember. Now we look to the contrast season of light and dark in Advent as we anticipate the coming of the Christ child. Darkness, the metaphor not only of despair and incapacity, but also of human and divine resourcefulness. As winter gives birth to darker nights and a second wave of the virus, life remains difficult for many, not only the Cathedral. We started a successful telephone chain in April. This has been a good way of keeping in touch with each other but especially those who have been isolating and housebound.

And now to some good news. The Cathedral hosted the ordination services over two days. Six deacons and eight priests were ordained. Although a rather different service than normal it was reverent and celebratory. It was also good to have a cantor sing for the first time since the Cathedral closed in March. It was great to share ministry with Revd Dr Gill Todd, who was ordained priest. Her first Eucharist took place in the Cathedral on Sunday 04 October. We also welcomed Rich Wootten, an ordinand on placement from St Padarn's, who is training at the Cathedral two days a week for two years.

The BBC Songs of Praise recorded in the Cathedral on 18th-19th October. Kathrine Jenkins and Aled Jones took part, alongside other singers, and musicians. The recording was for Remembrance and Advent Sundays, and Christmas programmes. The Cathedral choirs were also involved. Because the recording was a production, not a service, different guidelines apply. The Welsh Government gave permission, and all risk assessments were in place. The recording was shown on Remembrance Sunday in November. The main service they recorded was for Advent Sunday. That went out on Advent Sunday at the Morning Worship. You will be able to see it on BBC catch up if you missed it. The annual Baroque Festival that takes place in the Cathedral did not take place this year. However, the musicians spent three days filming in the Cathedral in August in preparation for the festival online which was broadcast in October. You can also see their performances on line.

The Cathedral volunteers who have faithfully committed to steward the daily opening of the Cathedral from 11.00am to 4.00pm throughout the summer, have done a great job. The emergence of this team has been very encouraging as a sign of growth and commitment in difficult times. I am grateful to them for their time. Due to the cold, reduction in tourists and visitors, the Cathedral has been closed since the last firebreak, but open for Sunday worship at 11am, which is livestreamed on Facebook. The Cathedral also has a said 1984 Prayer Book Eucharist on Mondays at 12.30. We have not been able to conduct the Sunday 8am 1984 Prayer Book service, so the Monday service offers provision for those who prefer the Prayer Book. The Cathedral clergy pray in the Cathedral daily at 9.30 am and 5.30pm. I know some who live close to the Cathedral find comfort to hear the treble bell ring twice a day at prayer time.

The Representative Body established a review group to review all Welsh Cathedrals. Discussions between Deans, Bishops and the RB have been taking place for six years, and not moved forward, until this year. We are hopeful that the RB will now resource the Cathedrals for mission. The review commenting on Brecon Cathedral described it as, 'Brecon is struggling to move forward and faces the most serious financial challenges of all the cathedrals. It has ambitious plans but has so far been unable to secure funding....' Dean and Chapter continue to work with new grant making consultants to write the third attempt application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. COVID prevented the Resilience Grant application being submitted, because HLF stopped all new applications until early 2021. But we are 'ready to go' and remain committed and hopeful. The initial grant will be for £86,000, that will assist us in writing a more robust bid for our exciting plans for urgent repairs and reordering.

As COVID-19 captivates the world and our lives, it continues to cause massive disruption, and dominates the news and social media. It has been our sacrifice as a

Church to model our lives on keeping everyone safe, as difficult, and costly as this is for us. It has been our responsibility to guide the Cathedral along the way amidst disruption, change and challenge, as indeed, all churches have done. Most staff remain on furlough leave. We have done this through careful planning, keeping in touch, ensuring the continued worship of God, offering our prayers, and proclaiming that 'Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come in glory'. It was good to welcome the Archbishop through Holy Week and Easter, who led us in our worship at the Cathedral for the Diocese and Province. I know many of you found great comfort through his ministry. We keep him in our prayers daily, and he regularly presides and preaches at the Cathedral. We remain grateful for his leadership, ministry, and wisdom.

We all know that challenges and crisis are part of our lives and when we go through crisis, we know the powerful impact of words and stories have on our well-being. Over the last few months, we have heard stories that sadden us, but also stories that lift our hearts. We have all missed worshipping together, fellowship and listening to music. Yet, we continue to be comforted and sustained by prayers, sacrament, and reading of Holy Scripture. We have seen contagious random acts of kindness and generosity. Through this, Brecon Cathedral will emerge with a redefined vision for the future, not just for ourselves, but for future generations. It is my prayer that we hold before us a purpose and future hope for the Cathedral, and this time will be an opportunity to deepen our relationship with God and each other. Zoom meetings will never replace gathering together to worship, even though zooms are probably here to stay and assist in communicating the Gospel to wider and varied audiences, that they may come to know God's love for them.

Finally, the Cathedral clergy went to Belmont Abbey on 1-2 March 2020 to discuss the future ministry, mission, strategy, and vision of the Cathedral. The time was facilitated by the Very Revd Michael Sadgrove, retired Dean Emeritus of Durham Cathedral. I worked with Michael at Sheffield Cathedral before his translation as Dean of Durham. It was a very productive and encouraging time away. I have been Dean of Brecon for six years, so it is now time reflect on the past, but more importantly to refresh our vision and strategy, because many things have developed and grown. A fresh vision is now needed. I have attached a copy of the vision. COVID, understandably, has prevented us putting the vision in to practice, but there is a renewed energy and appetite for change amidst the challenges.

Description

We are...

"...contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints." Jude 1.3

Brecon Cathedral has stood within sight of the Brecon Beacons since it was founded by Benedictine monks in 1093. Since then, the Cathedral has witnessed faithfully to the risen Christ as a priory, pilgrimage site, parish church, and since

1920 as the seat of the Bishop of the Diocese of Swansea & Brecon.

Vision

We aspire to be...

"... you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone." Ephesians 2:19-20

The Cathedral Church of St John the Evangelist seeks to be an inclusive, faithful, and holy community rooted in the active love of God, his creation, and our neighbours through prayer, fellowship, and service.

Purpose

What we do...

"As good stewards of the manifold grace of God, each of you should use whatever gift he has received to serve one another." 1

Peter 4:10

Grounded in daily prayer and worship, uplifted by our choral tradition, and enlivened by our fellowship and teaching, we confidently witness to the reconciling good news of Jesus Christ through our mission and ministry to Brecon, the Diocese, and the world.

PILLARS IN PARTICULAR...

Prayer & Worship

The cathedral stands as a monument to worshipping God "in the beauty of holiness" (Psalm 96:9). The monks who once lived here devoted their lives to the daily discipline of prayer. After the Reformation, this building became a place of worship for mainly the poor of Brecon. Prayer and worship continue to shape the life of the Cathedral community through regular public services of Eucharist and Evensong, group devotions, and the personal prayers of all the people who visit us.

Hospitality

Scripture calls the Church the Body of Christ, the gathered people of God, a fellowship of love. Being a Christian is thus as much about belonging as it is about belief. As beautiful as our building is, Brecon Cathedral is primarily the people who worship, pray, sing, love one another, learn, and enjoy each other's fellowship. We strive to be a place and people where others can see and experience God's love.

Learning Study, reflection, and formation have always been central to the Christian faith. Jesus called twelve disciples, who later instructed others about what they had seen and heard. Later, the church preserved ancient learning, founded schools, and invented universities. Once this Cathedral housed one of the largest libraries in Wales. That tradition continues today with our weekly bible study, study groups, academic conferences, children's activities, choir, and work with Priory School. We seek to form people in the teachings of Christ and to encourage the pursuit of wisdom and understanding.

Generous Stewardship God created humankind to be stewards of his creation, seeking always to foster the flourishing of all. This requires generosity and compassion,

by which we stand ready with our talents, money, and resources to share in Christ's redemptive mission to "make all things new" (Rev. 21.5) and to offer the "abundance of life" (John 10.10). We are committed to the good stewardship of finance and giving, local communities, our Cathedral heritage in developing and engaging with partner organizations with eco-friendly initiatives.

Service Love is the reason why we are Christians. Christ said, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13.35). We seek to obey Christ's command by loving and supporting one another and those who come to us. Both clergy and laity visit the sick, help those in need, console the bereaved, work with local charities, and provide care in other ways.

VALUES

WE BEHAVE.... *Who we are and what we do* are underpinned by our shared commitment to the values of our faith as revealed in the person of Christ Jesus. These are most succinctly expressed as the "fruits of the spirit", which are "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Gal. 5.22-23). Our values shape both our ministry to others and our collaborative work together. More specifically, we seek to be a place of:

Inclusive welcome where all may find a place to belong, be listened to, and encouraged. As the Mother Church of the Diocese of Swansea & Brecon, we seek to be a home for all who belong to our Diocese. As a place of worship in Brecon, we seek to be welcoming to all who live in and around our town. As a historic attraction, we seek to greet pilgrims and tourists from all over the UK and the world. Indeed, we seek through the care of our grounds to be hospitable to all creatures that live within our ancient precincts. This is a place to be accepted by others while being transformed by God.

Generosity where we put the needs and welfare of others before our own, even when we disagree. Because God has been generous in creating and redeeming each one of us, we believe we must be generous to others. In this way, we try to demonstrate the love and unity into which God calls us as Christians.

Compassion where we seek to bear one another's burdens and to practice mercy. Such compassion requires us to be patient with one another, encourage rather than blame, and actively to support each other in our mission and ministry.

Joy where we are thankful for God's immeasurable blessings and seek to delight in each other and God's creation. We strive to express God's joy in our work and fellowship with each other.

The Very Revd Dr Paul Shackerley
Dean of Brecon

A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols - a personal reflection influenced by the tradition



Rubens Adoration of the Magi – King's College Chapel, Cambridge

The tradition of having a series of lessons or lections serving the Church in its preaching and teaching and as part of Christian worship is an ancient one and as old as the Church itself. Across the centuries, councils and synods, reforms and revisions will have regulated the choice of readings and their role and positioning within the liturgy. Regulation has settled into regularity, and regularity into tradition. Tradition can make us feel part of something greater – a sense of belonging, perhaps in communion with previous generations. Collective remembering through physically repeated actions can in turn give comfort and may even lead to a feeling of nostalgia.

The 'traditional' service of Nine Lessons and Carols has ancient ancestry drawing from several historic strands. The lessons are all biblical, drawing from the Old and New Testaments and tell the journey from the Fall of Man, through Prophecy and Promise, to Birth and Redemption. Much of the music with its associated texts dates back several centuries, some carols have liturgical roots from ancient antiphons and office hymns, other carols can be linked the tradition of the medieval miracle play, while others have come from secular folk traditions. And yet there remains opportunity for more modern input.

Today's familiar form of Nine Lessons and Carols dates from 1880 when Edward White Benson, Bishop of Truro, first held this service in his Cathedral. His intention was to encourage Cornish revellers to celebrate Christmas in the Cathedral, as

an alternative to their usual festive drinking. In 1918 this form of service was adopted and adapted for use at King's College Chapel, Cambridge by its Dean, Eric Milner-White, who is credited with having written the familiar Bidding Prayer. The service traditionally begins with a single voice setting the scene with the first verse of *Once in Royal David's City*, the choir singing verse 2 and congregation joining from verse 3. The lessons would be read in turn by church officers in order of seniority upwards from the rank of chorister and these would alternate with congregational hymns and choir carols. All will stand for the reading of the ninth lesson, 'In the beginning was the Word', and then join heartily with *O come, all ye faithful* and *Hark, the herald*.

The Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols from King's College received its first radio broadcast by the BBC in 1928, soon becoming an annual feature, and was first televised in 1954. The reach of King's was to extend further with the release of Christmas LPs from the Choir in 1954, 1959 and 1965. David Willcocks succeeded Boris Ord as Director of Music in 1957 and made his mark with the service through his own last verse descants and choral arrangements.

In what was to further amplify the popularity of the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols gained by King's College Choir from its broadcasts and recordings, David Willcocks and Reginald Jacques were appointed editors of the series, *Carols for Choirs* – Book 1 published by OUP in 1961. Significantly, the Bidding Prayer, Lessons and Collects are printed at the back of Book 1, and many classic Willcocks carol arrangements feature, including *Sussex Carol*, and the (now ubiquitous) last verse arrangements of *O come, all ye faithful*, *Hark the Herald*, and *O little town*. Further volumes were published - Willcocks was joined by John Rutter to edit *Carols for Choirs* 2 (1970), 3 (1978) and 4 (1980). Book 5 celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the series in 2011.

Meanwhile, *The Oxford Book of Carols*, edited by Percy Dearmer, Ralph Vaughan Williams and Martin Shaw published in 1928, encouraged interest in the English traditional carol and raised awareness of the genre's folk heritage and context. Its successor, *The New Oxford Book Carols* appeared in 1992 which with over 300 carol settings describing itself as 'the most

comprehensive carol anthology in existence, a compendium of material from the Middle Ages to the present day that is breathtaking in its historical and geographical scope'.

While composers from the first half of the twentieth century often looked to the English folk tradition for inspiration, among them Gustav Holst and Ralph Vaughan Williams, a later generation of composers including Benjamin Britten, Peter Maxwell Davies and William Mathias were eager to set medieval texts to their own distinct musical language, juxtaposing antiquity with modernity. John Rutter has demonstrated immense skill as a choral arranger and orchestrator in his carols, he has arranged carols from folk tunes sourced from around the world, composed his own original carols, sometimes to his own texts, and consistently writes with wide appeal.

At St Mary's, Swansea (where I have directed the music since 2002) the City Carol Service follows the traditional format of Nine Lessons and Carols and is attended by the Bishop, HM's Lord Lieutenant of West Glamorgan, the High Sheriff, and the Lord Mayor, and open to all. While everyone may have their favourite carols, and some remain traditionally enshrined, it is healthy to ring the changes year on year. My predecessor at St Mary's, Mr Cliff Rose, was instrumental in building up an extensive Christmas repertoire in the Choir library and I have endeavoured to add to this when costs permit, keen to keep up with recent publications. I have even added a personal touch to the service by composing a new carol myself – something I have done every year since 2006.

When composing carols, I take inspiration from my chosen texts. I carefully sift through poetry spanning several centuries, until one speaks out to me. I strive to reflect in my music the structure of the poetry, the emotions and ebb and flow of the words. While I have felt great satisfaction from bringing the music from my head onto paper, onto the piano, onto the computer screen and through its speakers, there is that magic moment when the choir sings it at rehearsal for the first time – the music has now come alive. It is then moulded for performance.

Each year as I listen through to the King's College broadcast, and wait with anticipation to hear the latest commission, there will always be at least one carol that jumps out at me. I will source a copy to

consider its scoring, level of difficulty and suitability for St Mary's, Swansea, and make a note ready for future consideration. Listening over the years I have been particularly excited by *Illuminare, Jerusalem* by Judith Weir, *What sweeter music* by John Rutter, *Ding, dong, merrily on high* as arranged by Mack Wilberg, and Carl Rütli's *I wonder as I wander*.

Sadly, this year there will be no congregation present for the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols at King's College, and there will be no City Carol Service at St Mary's, Swansea. We can, however, keep in touch with one of our great Christmas traditions on Christmas Eve by tuning into *Carols from King's* on BBC Two, and to the *Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols* on BBC Radio 4, which thanks to the wonders of modern technology are also made available online through BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds.

Dr William Reynolds

Director of Music, St. Mary's Church, Swansea

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Our contributors.

Once again I am grateful to our contributors on a variety of themes for this issue of *The Newsletter*. There are two articles which I have received for which I had no space, they are now held over to the Easter issue. I also very grateful to the staff at the Diocesan Centre who, despite working from home, are able to produce and distribute both e mails and hard copies of each issue. ***Ed.***

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The Retired Clergy Newsletter

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Please send suggestions, comments, items of news by March 1st for the Easter issue. 1st for the Autumn issue.

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