

CORONAVIRUS

As the situation develops in relation to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, we are all adjusting to a different way of living. The Government's unequivocal directive to stay at home has quickly become the new reality for us. We do not go out unless it is absolutely necessary and when we do step outside, we practise social distancing.

Whilst all events for the foreseeable future throughout the country have either been cancelled or postponed, one event that will go ahead - but not as planned - will be the celebration of Easter Day when we remember Jesus' victory over death. His words in the Gospel according to St John about new life invite us to consider what that means for us and our communities today: "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly". (John 10:10).

Our chapel buildings might well be closed but as Churches we are still open to love and serve our communities. Many Churches throughout Wales of all denominations have responded with imagination and creativity to this challenging time. Services have been live-streamed on You Tube and Facebook; Bible studies and prayer meetings have been held on Zoom or Skype and a new digital confidence

has been discovered. On the other hand provision has been made for those who do not have access to the internet: written reflections have been prepared and distributed and phone links have been set up enabling a number of people to join together in worship. We give thanks for all that has been done!

In terms of practical support many of our Churches are involved with Food Banks who are providing an essential resource at this time. Others have volunteered to shop for neighbours and have been placing leaflets through doors offering to help if needed. Numerous phone calls are made throughout the day offering pastoral support.

We don't know for how long the restrictions will continue and we need to pace and prepare ourselves for the medium term. At a time when many in our local communities are anxious and afraid, the Church, now more than ever, has an opportunity to be seen beyond its four walls.

As we respond to this desperate situation, let's do what we can, to love, support and care for each other in a way that honours Christ and actively demonstrates the abundance of life given to us in Jesus.

AVAILABLE ON THE BUW WEBSITE:

Coronavirus Advice:

<http://www.buw.org.uk/24th-march-2020-coronavirus-advice/>

Keeping in Touch – Resources and Suggestions for Churches: <http://www.buw.org.uk/keeping-in-touch-resources-and-suggestions-for-churches/>

Important Information Regarding Safeguarding:

<http://www.buw.org.uk/important-information-regarding-safeguarding-and-covid-19/>

Advice from Ecclesiastical Insurers:

<https://www.ecclesiastical.com/risk-management/managing-risk-covid-19/>

BUW ANNUAL MEETINGS

It has been agreed to postpone the BUW Annual Meetings for the time being.

MOMENTUM
10-11 JULY 2020

POSTPONED

CHANGE THE ATMOSPHERE



UNDEB BEDYDDWYR CYMRU
AWR DUW YN GALW



Sul, Mehefin 21, Seion Newydd
17:00 Oedfa Gymunol
Pregethwr gwadd Parched Dafydd Iwan Morgan

Llun, Mehefin 22, Seion Newydd
18:00 Cofrestru
18:30 Y Gynhadledd
19:00 Oedfa'r Llywydd

Mawrth, Mehefin 23, Carmel, Pontlliw
09:15 Defosiwn

10:00 Y Gynhadledd gan gynnwys
Gwaith yr elusen 'Open Doors'
Darlith y Gymdeithas Heddwch

19:00 Oedfa'r Weinidogaeth
Pregethwr gwadd Parched Vincent Watkins

POSTPONED

‘Welcome to Wales’ – first mission workers arrive in Llanelli!

Sunday 5th January was both a special and historic service in Gobaith church, Llanelli. During the service the congregation welcomed a new mission worker and family to support the work in Gobaith sponsored by the Baptist Union of Wales.

Nana & Sungsu Paek are from Seoul, Korea. They have come to Wales with their three daughters Seowon (13), Seojin (11) and Seoa (6) who are now settling into school in Llanelli. After the service the members welcomed the family with special Korean snacks, Welsh cakes and of course a ‘cup of tea’!

Both Nana & Sungsu have felt a strong call to serve God in Wales for some time and had been serving in Llanelli during 2017-2018. Sungsu is a pastor and his wife Nana, a pastoral worker. It was during their time in Wales that they came to love the church at Gobaith and when they had to return to Korea in 2018 felt sure they would return.

Since the Baptist Union of Wales registered as a Sponsor for Religious Workers with the UK VISA and Immigration service much work has been put in place to make possible what we now know as ‘reverse mission’. Where Wales once sent missionaries overseas like Robert Jermaine Thomas and Timothy Richard, we recognise our need for mission at home in Wales. As a mission worker, Nana & Sungsu raise all their own support and are sustained by their sending church. They serve us here in Wales, trusting God will provide for them.



Nana and Sungsu Paek with their children, Seowon, Seojin and Seoa

On Friday 27th December 2019 we anxiously waited the safe arrival of Nana, Sungsu and the children at Heathrow airport. Praise God that this all went smoothly and they are now living

and working in Wales with the local church.

Please remember the Paek family in your prayers as they support Rev Paul Smethurst and Robyn his wife.

CORONAVIRUS

Included with this edition of the Messenger is a one page supplement with words of encouragement for our Churches during this challenging period in our history. We ask God’s rich blessing on everybody as we lean on the Good Shepherd knowing of his tender and loving care for each and every one of us.

“Pray without Ceasing”

This year the Baptist Union of Wales is encouraging churches and individuals to make 2020 a Year of Prayer.

As we begin a new decade, the Mission Board felt the need for a renewed emphasis on prayer. As Christians, we believe in the power of prayer and that faithful, persistent prayer really does make a difference. The idea of setting apart a year of prayer was well received in the hope that churches across Wales would respond and unite as one Baptist family to pray for God's work in Wales.

During the year prayer packs which include a variety of resources, ideas and suggestions to help encourage congregations to pray together, will be provided to all churches and ministers. The campaign began in December with the provision of the first prayer pack “Prayers of Waiting” for use during Advent and New Year. This was followed by a second pack “Prayers of Preparation” providing prayers and resources for use during Lent, St David's Day and Easter. Further packs will follow for use at Pentecost and Harvest.

As we continue to pray together as a Baptist family across Wales, we'd love to hear how you and your church have been taking the opportunity to make prayer a focus in 2020. Please feel free to send us your stories or ideas via email: simeon@ubc.cymru or contact us at Y Llwyfan by post / telephone.

We give thanks to Geoff Champion from the Gwent Association for his report on how the Gwent Baptist Association embraced the call to make 2020 a Year of Prayer through 24 hour prayer.

Round the clock—Power of Prayer



If you truly believe in the power of prayer, then please pray and keep on praying! That was the challenge given to Baptist churches in Gwent as they concluded a special 24-hour prayer event with a service of prayer and praise at Tabernacle, Newbridge on 25th January.

Organised by the Revd. Jonathan Forman (Blaenau Gwent, Abertillery) on behalf of the Gwent Baptist Association, the around-the-clock prayer drive was just one of a number of initiatives the Association has planned to mark 2020 designated by the Baptist Union of Wales as a Year of Prayer.

The aim is for all of us in the Baptist “family” to seek God and His guidance as churches and chapels face ever-growing challenges in this secular society in which we live.

Jonathan produced an easy-to-use prayer pack with Bible readings and prayer suggestions for each of the 24 hours with special attention being given to how David was able to maintain an intimate relationship with God through the ups and downs of his life as underlined by Psalm 23. Some churches chose to hold extended prayer sessions while others selected specific slots during the period.

BUW Director of Mission, the Revd Simeon Baker gave an all-Wales perspective on prayer needs at the final service and highlighted the exciting development of new “reverse missionaries” - from countries which we once thought of as the overseas mission field - arriving to serve our churches. Tim Moody, assistant pastor at Moriah Baptist Church, Risca, focused on the need to pray for the churches in Gwent. “If you really believe in the power of prayer, then please pray and keep on praying!”, he said.

Jonathan said: “It was great that we could all pray with one heart as we seek to better serve God and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

*Geoff Champion,
Gwent Baptist Association*



Pembrokeshire Prayer Breakfast 2020



The sun shone brightly in Wolfscastle on Saturday morning, 29th February for the Pembrokeshire Prayer Breakfast. This was the third Welsh language Prayer Breakfast organised in Pembrokeshire and was attended by approximately 115 people. Following a delicious Welsh breakfast, worship was led by the special guests, the Reverend Dr Rhys Llwyd and his wife, Dr Menna Machreth Llwyd. It was a privilege to pray for situations within the County and particularly the agriculture, education, and health sectors. Prayer was also offered for the precarious state of Christian witness.

Rhys, a minister at Caersalem Caernarfon, Calfaria Penygroes and Ebenezer Llanllyfni, has been in ministry there for nearly ten years. He presented a warm, challenging and humorous address. He referred to our responsibility of holding on to our confidence in Jesus Christ's Gospel, without any shame whatsoever, in the assurance that God is still at work in Wales. This was his exhortation:-

“Do not remember the former things,
Nor consider the things of old.

Behold, I will do a new thing,

Now it shall spring forth! Shall you
not know it?

I will even make a road in the
wilderness and rivers in the
desert.” (Isaiah 43:18-19)

After the address, there was a time of prayer, before concluding with Lewis Valentine's hymn, “Dros Gymru'n gwlad, O Dad, dyrchafwn gri.”

Some of the comments made by those present: “Everyone enjoyed the speaker and the bacon!” “A special morning, thank you very much – have eaten too much” “a good and convenient setting”, “I enjoyed the breakfast very much,” “excellent to hear a young preacher speak so well!”

The Allttrafon Hotel stands under a huge rock shelter, which is very similar to a wolf raising its head to greet the moon. It is the shape of the rock that has given the village the name “Wolfscastle”. As Christians, we are not wolves raising our voices to the moon, but children greeting our heavenly father, with confidence in his loyalty and justice.

“He is the Rock, his work is perfect;
and all his ways are just.

A faithful God who does no wrong,
upright and just is He.”

(Deuteronomy 32:4)

We enjoyed an excellent morning,
full of blessings!

Revd Geraint Morse



Celebrating Our Patron Saint at the Senedd

It was a privilege to have been invited to the St David's Day Parliamentary Prayer Breakfast on Thursday morning, March 5 – an event held for the third year, and organised by Darren Miller, AM.

On the previous evening an International Reception had been held at the Senedd, with representatives from the USA. The theme of the evening was ‘Celebration’. Dr Dafydd Tudur from the National Library, gave a presentation on translations of various Bibles, focusing on Dr John Davies' translation of 1620 - celebrating 400 years. Examples of some early Bibles were on display from the National Library.

Professor Norman Doe gave an interesting address on ‘Celebrating a century since the existence of the Church in Wales.’ He was clearly an expert in his field and had recently edited “A New History of the Church in Wales”. Special thanks to Professor Doe for a presentation that will be remembered for a long time.

Thursday morning saw a hundred guests gather for breakfast in the Pierhead building, to be transported back in time to appreciate the spectacular history of the building.

The occasion was enriched by short but purposeful speeches by Rebecca Evans, AM, the Rt Hon Simon Hart MP and the Most Reverend John Davies, Archbishop of Wales. Prayers were an important part of the programme, with an emphasis on the contemporary events of our day. Fitting musical performances of high standard were given by “Sound of Wales” and singers Huw and Elizabeth Priday.

What better way to celebrate our patron saint's festival?

Thank you Darren Miller for arranging a memorable prayer Breakfast.

*Mr David A E Peregrine
UBC President*

Saundersfoot Ministers Conference 2020

Introducing Cameron Roxburgh & Forge Cymru



In the only week of dry weather in February, two groups of Ministers and Leaders travelled to Saundersfoot for the annual conference. This year was special in that we had the largest number of people attending the English speaking conference and for the first time in Saundersfoot, a Welsh speaking Ministers conference was held with a good number attending.

Our main speaker for both conferences was Cameron Roxburgh from Vancouver, Canada. Cam is part of the Forge network involved in helping denominations and churches globally to think seriously about mission in a changing world. For his theme, Cam shared with us that the foundation for any mission is the underpinning theology. Speaking from 1 Peter 2:9-10, his talks covered the topics of identity, character and vocation and how that relates to the missional nature of God.

It was a privilege getting to know Cam and to hear of his Welsh roots in Abergavenny and Pentreuchaf, Pwllheli. We appreciated his humble and honest engagement with both conferences as he explained that mission is not a quick fix but flows out of our understanding of God. We are looking forward to further conversations with Cam as churches across Wales are invited to join in further training that will start in September.

“Regarding Saundersfoot, as always I appreciate the relaxed atmosphere, good food and accommodation, and the way the programme allows plenty of time between

sessions to catch up with old friends and make new ones. Some conferences fill all the available time with input of one sort or another, but I think Saundersfoot has the balance just right. Regarding Cameron, I was very pleased with what I saw and heard. We can all be a bit wary about so-called experts from overseas, but I felt Cameron came across as someone whose experience can be relevant to our situation, and from whom we can learn a great deal. I particularly appreciated his emphasis on how the church needs to reflect the image of God, rather than jumping straight into church growth. I look forward to hearing and learning more from Cam in the coming months.”
Revd Ifor Williams

“The Saundersfoot conference is always helpful as an opportunity to take a step out of my normal context for reflection and renewal. This year in particular I was blessed by the chance to have several in-depth and helpful conversations with people who normally live a hundred miles away or more, including the chance to speak with Jane Day about her role (in BUGB) supporting and facilitating the ministry of women (and a group of us were able to chat about how we might enable that support to include BUW). Cam Roxburgh brought encouraging stories of his missional experience in Canada and gave plenty of food for thought to share with our churches!”

Revd Dr Helen Dare, Broad Haven



Cam Roxburgh

A PRAYER FOR EASTER - Easter Hope in a Good Friday World

Father, we live in a Good Friday world where all too often you seem absent. Creation is abandoned and exploited by those who care little that you made it good. Those made in your image are abandoned and ravaged by war. Those who call on you in worship are abandoned to injustice. And now disease stalks the land. We echo the cry from the cross – *My God, my God, why have you abandoned us?*

But you did not abandon your Son, or have you abandoned your world. The story does not end on Good Friday, for you have raised your Son from the grave. So we boldly cry out in his name. Cry out for healing, cry out for justice, cry out for peace, cry out for re-creation.

In the midst of all the bad news, give us the courage to proclaim the good news of Easter hope. By the Spirit of our Risen Lord, let us live out the grace he has given us, that not only with our mouths, but also in our lives, we may truly be your Easter people.

In Christ's name we pray,

Amen

Revd Dr Peter Baines



EASTER BLESSINGS
from Judith, Simeon,
Menna, Bonni, Nigel,
Helen and Christian.

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10: 23-25