



The

Messenger

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The Messenger / Y Negesydd is the Baptist Union of Wales' termly magazine, and for many years it has been an important way for us to share news, encouragements and developments from churches and associations all across the Union – on both language wings. And you'll notice that to this end the Messenger has had another revamp! We're planning to bring it out slightly less frequently from now on (dropping to three issues a year) but with longer articles and features. This is because we can now publish shorter items more easily on our new website and email newsletters, leaving space here to engage more deeply with what God is doing amongst us.

And there really is a lot to be encouraged about within our Union at present, even though many of us are undoubtedly feeling a little weary after almost two years of disruption to church life. As you'll see in this issue, despite the restrictions

we have had a number of successful internships over the past year, with real spiritual growth and blessing for both the interns and the host churches (pages 4-5 and 8). The Forge missional programmes have been a breath of fresh air for many of us, providing a helpful and rare opportunity to step back and return to basic principles of following Jesus and being church (page 3 opposite). In fact, despite the fact that the pandemic has shaken much of our familiar church life, as Gwent Association heard recently, it has also given us a real opportunity to reach out afresh to communities and people who are thirsting for true life (see page 6).

We hope you will enjoy this edition of *The Messenger* and if you have any feedback or suggestions for future issues, please email carwyn@ubc.cymru

Carwyn Graves, Editor (on behalf of the BUW staff team)

Mission notes - reviewing Forge

Anyone driving a new car may have discovered that these days you have a tyre repair kit instead of a spare wheel. The promise is that 'all you have to do' is spray the contents of the can into the flat tyre and off you go. It sounds like the perfect solution! You don't have to use a jack, struggle with over-tight wheel nuts or empty the contents of your boot to lift out the spare. The solution is in the can. The trouble is, you will only know if it actually works when it's too late.

If we are honest, most of us would prefer easy answers to many of life's challenges. We also know that the 'quick fix' doesn't always provide long-term answers. Many churches across Wales are asking big questions about their future: How do we keep going? Who is going to follow us? Where are the missing generations and how do we reach them today?

This past year the Baptist Union of Wales has been investing in missional training. The Forge Missional training we have chosen does not promise a quick fix but hopefully allows us to think more deeply and equip us more effectively to be the church in a post-Christian society.

At the centre of this is the two-year missional training course 'Ethos' that began in September 2020 with some deeper reflection around our understanding of who God is, His Church, who we are in Christ and what kind of leaders we need to be to discern where God is leading us in mission. Around sixty people from all corners of Wales have met online every two weeks with Cameron Roxburgh to read, learn and discuss. Most people have come with a small group of leaders from their church and some attend on their own. A different group of people have also been following the 'Explore' program which meets once per month to reflect and talk about missional practice. Throughout 2020 we had a

good number attend each month and many have chosen to carry on with new attenders joining 'Explore' this September. Last year we focused on what being a 'missionary people' means for us today rooted in our reading of Scripture, our practice within the church and how we live among our neighbours. This year we are looking at seven disciplines that shape the church for mission. This is what one of our younger ministers had to say about the training

"Forge has been a brilliant resource that has helped bring me a better understanding of how both the church and the individual have a crucial role to play in mission. The course has been a rare opportunity for church leaders to put down the lead and to learn. This has, in turn, created a safe space for us to honestly explore and discuss how mission works in our church contexts. I have loved the opportunity to hear from Cam and other leaders who are further along the process of developing a mission-minded church, learning from their experiences and finding inspiration in their stories. Sadly, Forge doesn't do it all for you; the course will always remain a course unless we are willing to take up the call to be missional and lead our churches in meeting the practical and spiritual needs of the communities in which God has placed us."

Rev Tim Moody, Moriah Baptist Church

If you are interested in joining either of these courses in future, feel free to email simeon@ubc.cymru.

Simeon Baker



Since last September I have been doing a number of different things as part of my internship; sessions at Gomer and Seion chapels' services, a weekly study every Monday and Thursday evening, mentoring sessions with Elen and Hannah from the church and weekly sessions with Derek (the minister). I have loved having so much time to study and focus on my relationship with God over the last 10 months.

Over the course of the year I've studied a number of books and topics:

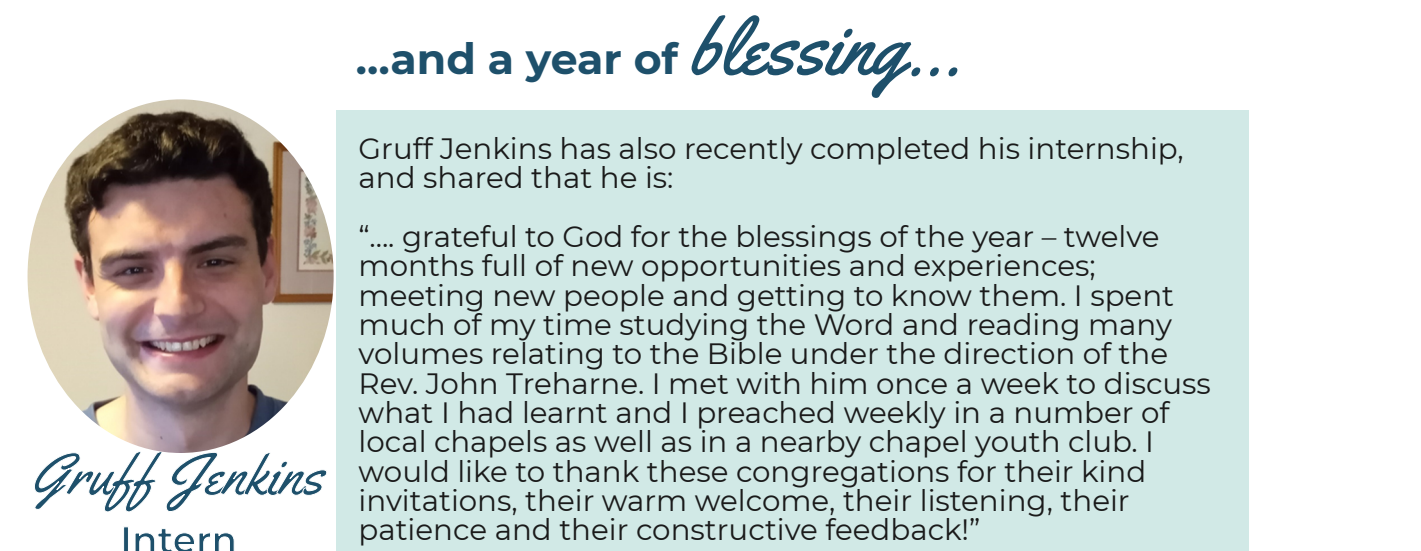
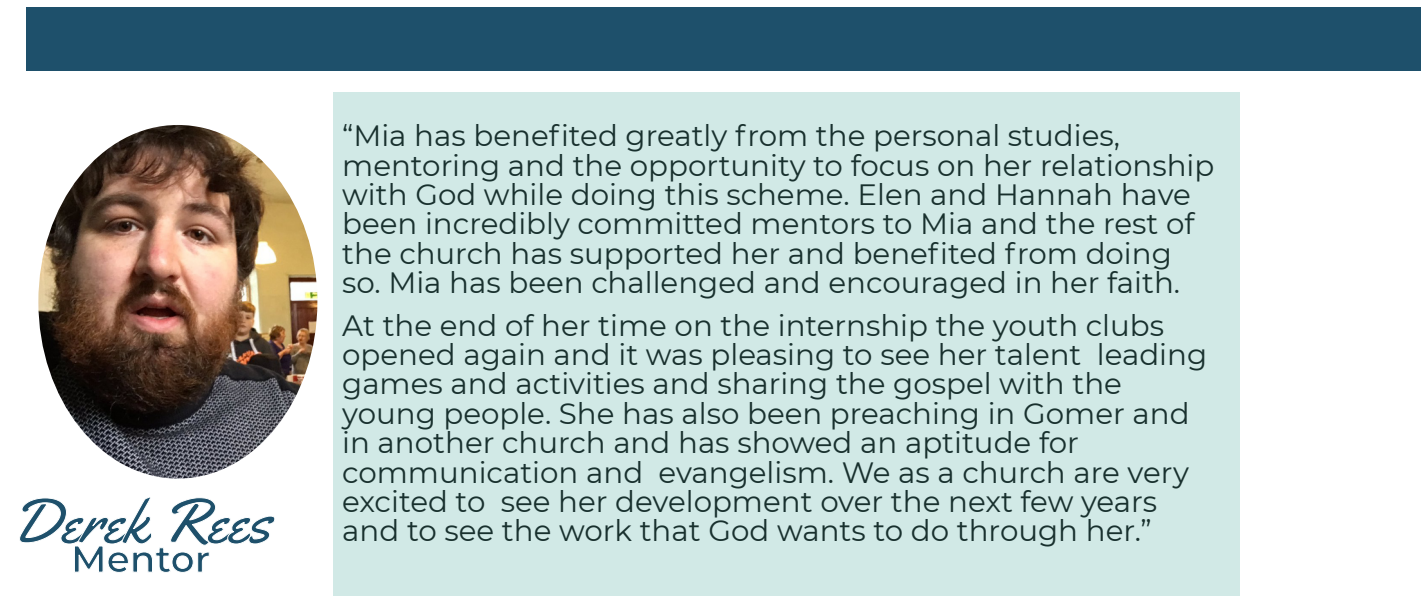
- Cross-examined is a book that looks at different aspects of the cross.
- Taking God at his word: This is a book that talks about the nature of God's word and how it affects how we see it.
- How to Pray is a book that goes through what it is to pray and how to do so biblically.

With Elen, we studied the Bible. We read and discussed Philippians, Galatians, James, Ruth and 2 Corinthians. Then with Hannah we

went through Stay Salt : a book that discusses different aspects of the gospel, such as people's attitudes towards the gospel, challenges we can face in how to share the gospel in a "post Christian" culture and so on. It inspired a lot of conversations about our personal experiences and how we learn and adapt for the next time we share the gospel. In the sessions with Derek we looked at different types of theology such as Biblical Theology, Christology and Trinitarian Theology. I've also been doing written tasks to prepare for the sessions.

In doing this internship my understanding of God and the Bible has grown so much. My own relationship and dependence on God have grown and I have grown in my practical ability in areas such as discussing the Bible, explaining the Bible and sharing the Bible. Because of the internship I'm in a better place to live life as a Christian but also to do the work God is calling me to such as preaching, sharing God's word and serving the church.

Mia Anderson





News from across.... The Baptist Union of Wales

Danger of 'getting back to normal'

Churches today have the best opportunity since World War Two to bring hope to people shaken by the pandemic by telling them about the love of Jesus. That was one of the key messages of the Revd. Gavin Calver, CEO of the Evangelical Alliance, who was the guest speaker at the Gwent Baptist Association's Autumn Council meeting on 30th September.

Gavin said that church attendances in the UK immediately after the war were huge but then fell back to pre-war levels. Why? The world was looking for hope but the Church wanted to get back to normal. It spent too much time and energy looking after itself and getting back to normal. By the time it was ready to reach out to the lost, who had been desperately looking for hope, the lost had got over the moment and moved on.

"I think the season we are now in is the closest since the end of the Second World War. I am not comparing Covid to a world war but people are still desperately looking for hope in their lives. They will probably not come to our buildings so we must go out into our communities and demonstrate the love of Jesus with acts of kindness and compassion." Gavin continued. "In my view, we will never, ever get this great opportunity again."

Geoff Champion



New life in Montgomeryshire

We were delighted to hear of a number of baptisms in the last few weeks in rural chapels in Montgomeryshire. Each of them took place in the preferred way in that group of chapels by immersion in local streams! Maggie Rich, minister at one of them, picks up the tale of one of those baptisms:

On a beautiful warm and sunny September Sunday afternoon, family, friends and church members gathered in the field down by the brook to witness Andrew's baptism. Round the edge of the field, several farming families stood on "cattle watch" to deter the cows from coming too close to investigate what was going on. Crystal clear water rippled over the stones and flowed into the pool.

As Andrew knelt there was an expectant hush – the only sound being the music of the water and birdsong in the trees. After confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Son of God and his personal Saviour, Andrew was baptised in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. As he came up out of the water Andrew raised His face to the heavens and whispered, "Thank you, Lord." Dripping, but gloriously happy, Andrew headed for the tractor shed to dry off and everyone made their way back to the village chapel, where we celebrated communion and Andrew was received into membership of the church.

Maggie Rich

Renew Wellbeing spaces

Knighton and Knucklas Baptist church are one of a growing number of churches opening up their building to run these sessions. The idea is to welcome anyone to come, try a craft, do some mindful colouring, bring a hobby to share, have a chat & a cuppa or simply enjoy sitting in our quiet space - with the open offer of prayer. All are welcome and there is no charge.

Big Thank You! for Timothy Richard



The 'Timothy Richard Appeal' has now come to an end with Baptist Union of Wales churches raising the amazing total of £37,783. In what has been a challenging time to hold an appeal the churches have responded so generously.

BMS have written to say: "This is a great result and we were thrilled to receive these funds! We are very grateful for all that the BUW has done to promote this project. With such suffering being experienced by the refugee children, education gives them and their parents the hope of a better future. Thank you, and all the churches and individuals who have supported this appeal, for standing with these children and providing for their needs in such dire circumstances."

A personal message of thanks from the Director of BMS World Mission, Dr Kang San Tan, can be seen on our website: www.buw.wales/big-thank-you-for-timothy-richard-appeal/



COP-26: declaration, prayer and action

The global climate is destabilizing quickly, and humans are responsible. There is no longer any scientific dispute of this, and government commitments now to rein in emissions are crucial. In this context, the next COP gathering, which takes place from Sunday 31 October to Friday 12 November in Glasgow, is of historical importance.

This has been recognized by scientific and campaigning groups worldwide, and the European Baptist Federation has also newly passed a resolution in relation to the summit. The Baptist Union of Wales commends to all its churches this resolution, which you will find on our website. There is an urgent need for prayer about this over the coming weeks, and a mass demonstration has been organized in Cardiff for November 6th at noon.

Christian Aid have helpfully provided resources to help us pray into this in an informed way: www.christianaid.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/climate-justice-every-moment-matters

And from around...
The World



Ten minutes with...

Hannah Smethurst

There are people of all sorts in our churches, all with different stories of how God has worked in their lives. This time, we're meeting one of our current interns....

"It's lovely to meet you! For those of us who don't know you, tell us who you are..."

Well, I'm Hannah! I am 24 years old, originally from Llanelli and now living here in Caernarfon. I like baking cakes – that's where you'll find me if I have a couple of spare hours. And I like to be outside in God's creation as well. From Llanelli I would go up to Pen y Fan and here there is also plenty of choice of mountains!

How did you come to know Jesus?

Well, I grew up in a Christian family, and heard the gospel there and in children's clubs in chapel. I loved it and could see that the people there had something special. When I was five or six I had a conversation with my parents and said that I wanted Jesus in my life. Since then I've been learning little by little what it means to follow him!

What is the internship and how do you get to do it?

The internship is basically a year where you get to work with a local church, but more than that it is an opportunity to discover your talents and God's plans for your life. I was part of Action Team Wales in Arfon in 2018/19 after finishing university. It was a blessed year and I felt God's call to mission in Wales. I moved home to work and prayed that God would show me the way forward. Then I got talking to people I knew to seek

guidance and so I started the Derwen (missional training) scheme last year. And then I came to hear about the internship, applied, was interviewed... and here I am!

You've only just started in Caernarfon – but is there a highlight so far that you could share with us?

I would have to say the services on Sundays! After the pandemic period and everything on zoom, being in the chapel, it being full with children and people of all ages there worshipping together – that has been a real thrill. I feel that I have seen the real church once again, one that is full of life!

Amazing! And what are your hopes or plans for the coming year?

I want to grow in relationships with the people of the church, and help people get to know Jesus better. And one particular way of doing that is through the weekly youth club. I guess really I just hope to have wide experiences within church life, including some that are outside my personal comfort zone! And beyond that, I want to see more clearly and specifically God's plan for my life and for the church in Wales.

How can we pray for you, Hannah?

Thanks! Perhaps three small things:

- 1) That I would quickly find my feet and establish a good weekly rhythm.
- 2) That I would grow in my relationships here and be able to build meaningful ones.
- 3) For me to make the most of the coming year."

Do you know of anyone who would benefit from the internship scheme? Email simeon@ubc.cymru for further details.

THE MESSENGER is produced three times a year by the Baptist Union of Wales. However, viewpoints expressed in this magazine should not be taken as representing the Union's official stance on any given matter. Registered office:

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