



The

Messenger

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Missionaries to Wales

Using our buildings

Getting to know: Ann
Morgan

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'Christ is Risen, He is risen indeed!'

This joyful Easter statement is at the core of the Christian faith. It's the assurance that Jesus, who conquered sin and death on the cross of Calvary, really is the first fruits of the resurrection life to come.

We have been reminded in the most sobering of ways of the importance of our hope beyond this life by the terrible atrocities happening in Ukraine, which is home to 2 million Baptists. Their resilience and generosity in using churches as places of refuge, and their pleas to the rest of the Baptist family worldwide to pray, because 'God will do it' have been inspirational. At the time of writing there are numerous ways that churches here can support the people of Ukraine, both financially (e.g. BMS's Ukraine appeal) and through hospitality. Please let us know if you think your church may be able to help in that way - carwyn@ubc.cymru

The same God who is, we trust, answering prayers in Ukraine is at work amongst us in Wales. In this issue

we tell the story of a bold step of faith taken by the chapels in Llangefni, what happened next in the story of our last Action Wales Teamers, the existing new VISA programme bringing missionaries from around the world to Wales, and we interview one of our hard-working trustees.

We also wanted to let you know that as well as the Messenger, you can now get more regular updates on what is happening across BUW, we now have a monthly news email (in English or Welsh) that anyone can sign up for. Just go to www.buw.wales/baptist-news and fill in your name and email address.

Finally, if you have any feedback or suggestions for future issues of the Messenger, please email carwyn@ubc.cymru

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

PS. Note the date for our summer conference - 24/25th June, Carmarthen. All welcome!



Mission notes - Missionaries to Wales

In the late 19th century Wales sent some of its best to serve as Missionaries to faraway lands long before air travel. Such was the conviction of their belief, they were prepared to leave all behind to share the gospel of Jesus with those who had never heard it. The incredible stories of people like Timothy Richards, Ffaldybrenin, Robert Jermain Thomas, Rhayader and David Evan Jones from Llandderfel are still told today.

Here in 2022 mission workers are coming to Wales. For the past three years the Baptist Union of Wales has been responding to a growing number of people who feel called to Wales from overseas and seeing how we can facilitate it. Sungsu and Nana Paek were the first to arrive under this scheme and came with their three daughters from Seoul in South Korea. They are currently living in Llanelli and supporting the ministry at Hope/Gobaith church. Anna Ketchum had strong links with Penuel, Carmarthen and the VISA sponsorship has allowed her to work with the church for a longer period of time. Jeff & Linda Kim arrived from Los Angeles in 2021 and are now based within the Gwent Association seeking God's will for a church to serve in that region. We are also hoping that Phil Wyman will be able to join us here in Wales before the summer. Phil will be based with Caersalem, Caernarfon but will also have a wider pioneering ministry that will help our churches think about reaching a majority of people who see Christianity as something we have forgotten and left behind here in Wales.

Long before this VISA sponsorship began, some of our churches have had the privilege of hosting mission workers for a number of years to great effect. People like Peter & Hyeran Cho in Newbridge, Mike & Mary Bave in Pembroke Dock, Trey and Amelia McCain in Penygroes, Isaias Grandis in Llanelli, David Campbell in Holywell and Rob & Andrea Filgate who recently went home to Canada from Cardigan. The gift that these people and others bring to us from God can be significant, as they come with different experiences and perspectives to those of us who have only been shaped by Welsh or British Christian norms.

Like all good mission work the investment of time and energy these people are making in our contexts requires sacrifice. All of these people come to Wales with the prayerful and financial support of friends, family and churches. They take time to learn Welsh culture, language and invest themselves wherever they can to support God's work here in Wales. And adjustments always need to be made, both on the part of the incoming worker and the receiving church.

Today Wales is a very different place from one that Timothy Richards left to go to China. Now we find ourselves needing more than ever to share with people in Wales who know all the words to 'Bread of heaven' but have not tasted the Living Bread. We are thankful to God for all those who come to serve and witness here in Wales and would ask you to pray for them also.

Simeon Baker



Back in 2018-2019 we had a great Action Wales Team on placement in Arfon, NW Wales. We wanted to catch up with Eleri, Gruff and Hannah to see where God has led them since...

Hello! It's great to be with you all! So tell us first what you did next after Action Wales Team?

G: I was really unsure what path God wanted me to follow – teaching or ministry. So I went and did a year as a Maths teaching assistant to get more experience on that side, which really helped me decide in favour of ministry! So I then applied for the BUW internship and did a year of learning on the job before now starting on theological study at Cardiff Baptist College.

Brilliant! And Hannah, we know you followed a similar path. Eleri, what were your next steps?

E: I had expected to do further study, but God closed that door and opened another one at an insurance firm in Cardiff. But my team got given redundancy back in the autumn and it did look like God might be saying the time was right for me to go back into social policy study. And amazingly, I got a job with Christian Aid and got accepted for a part-time master's, which go together really well.

That's wonderful. So now that a couple of years have passed, as you look back at your time on the gap year, what would you say are the major things you learnt from that experience with us?

H: I think for all of us, just how essential it is to work as a team and to work well alongside other people! We all had different skills and strengths so there was this process of working out what mine were, what theirs were...

G: Exactly. It can be so easy I find to have this mentality of a one-man band, but actually when

you're in at the deep end you realize you need to share the burden. And it also makes such a difference in terms of processing things.

E: It was also really good preparation for real life – just getting involved in normal church life, navigating people's preferences and ways of doing things, and then being a Christian in 'real life' as opposed to Uni or at home. It really laid some important foundations for me as a Christian.

G: And one more thing – I got to preach for the first time, just two weeks in to the year and then throughout the year! Which feels providential, given what I'm doing now

Brilliant. So what do you think the future holds for you?

G: Well, only God knows what he has in store but I am continuing my studies and hopefully will then enter the ministry.

E: I found it tough initially with the pandemic and being in a new city to settle in a church, but I've now found one which is a big blessing. So between that, settling in to my job and masters I feel I have plenty to focus on right now!

H: I am currently doing missional training as part of my church internship, and I do feel a call to mission in Wales. I'll just need to see what kind of missional ministry God calls me to....

Thank you all and we will continue praying for God's hand on your lives!

Do you know of anyone between 19 and 25 who is wondering about the future and might be interested in joining Action Wales Team 2022? Applications close in May; anyone is welcome to contact carwyn@ubc.cymru for an informal chat.



Using the building to reach *the community...*

Ieuan Wyn Jones is well known as the former Deputy First Minister until 2011, but his activity alongside a crew of other local people from the chapels in the Llangefni area is less well known—though they are opening a new furrow for the future.

'There were traditionally five nonconformist chapels here in Llangefni', says Ieuan, 'but as in many parts of Wales, their story was one of gradual decline.' When the Wesleyan Ebeneser chapel closed some ten years ago, he and many in the area began to think about the future. They could see the way things were going, and the danger that all the chapels would close one by one if they continued down the current trajectory. 'And really, it had become a fairly dismal situation given that these buildings had been put up to be used throughout the week, but they were now in use for only two hours or so on a Sunday', he adds.

The Baptists and Independents in the town had worshipped together for some years, and we then opened discussions with other denominations. They wanted to reach out – there were so many needy groups in the town and they saw an opportunity in uniting to do something new and so make the church more relevant to the community. They assessed the buildings the different chapels owned and even considering building a new building, but decided in the end that the site of Moriah, the Presbyterian church, was the most suitable to adapt to community needs.

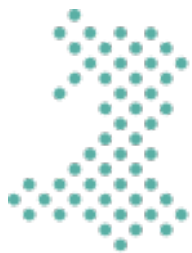
They then ran a fundraising campaign and the necessary income came from many directions, including from the sale of the Peniel Baptist building. And now in spring 2022 the transformation of Moriah into a multi-use centre – the Glanhwfa Centre – is underway.

'We already have three partners who want to use the building during the week,' explains Ieuan. 'Age Cymru (Gwynedd and Anglesey) will run a day centre for older people, Bwyd Da Môn want to run a lunch club providing fresh food for people on low incomes as well as cooking lessons, and then there's Ty Cana, who will use the space for musical work with young people. So there will always be something going on here!'

Ieuan was keen to explain that the churches want to ensure this will not just be a community centre; *"the missional side is very important to us. The Glanhwfa Centre will serve the community but we as a church want this new-look building to be a means of bridging between the chapel and the community in a way that the old buildings did not permit. We already have a service for children once a month or so that is more informal, and we have seen the fruits of that. We really hope that this venture will open up a new, innovative and different pathway for us as nonconformist churches in our communities."*



*Ieuan Wyn
Jones*



News from across....

The Baptist Union of Wales

BUW 2022 conference and Momentum!

Everyone is welcome to sunny (!) Carmarthen this summer for a joyful time of reconnecting together. On Friday 24 June we will have the opportunity to come together as a Union for our annual conference, followed by a varied and informal programme for the whole family on Saturday 25 June that will focus on helping us listen to God! All are welcome to the Friday, when we will install our incoming President, Dr Densil Morgan. The day will run from 10am to 6pm and will be followed by an evening meal together. Tickets are expected to be around £45 pp to include lunch and dinner.

Our **'Prayer, picnic and party'** day on Saturday 25th, held in conjunction with SWBA and BMS, will be a special day for the whole Baptist family to share around the theme of 'Hearing God's Voice'. The whole day will be family friendly with activities for all ages to participate in and a chance to renew fellowship with friends. In festival style you have the choice to attend as many or as few activities as you wish with the emphasis on 'coming together':

- Engage creatively with our Bible reading as we hear God speak through His Word.
- If you like to sing, head over to the community choir!
- Bring some creativity to the community art project with arts and crafts.
- Join in with fun and games with a difference in the Sports Hall.
- Go deeper in a series of short talks on topical issues with guest speakers.
- Or maybe you just want an ice cream in the sun catching up with friends – you can do that too without feeling you should be somewhere else!

Registration details will go out in next month's News email and the Bulletin (for ministers and secretaries), but for now keep the dates: Friday and Saturday 24-25th June at the Halliwell centre, Carmarthen.

2022 Council - 'visionary programme'

'This is an exciting and visionary programme of work!' 'I am excited to be part of a Union that is stepping forward in faith!' Just some of the comments from Council members as BUW's Joint Council which met on Wednesday 23 March to review the work that is underway across the Union. In challenging times, the reports from the boards and committees highlighted the progress being made both behind the scenes and more visibly to enable us all 'to be effective and contemporary witnesses to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ' in Wales and beyond. Some of the highlights that were mentioned included:

- 6 mission workers to Wales now on our VISA programme (see p.3)
- 4 students commended for training by BUW
- An innovative new approach to empty chapel buildings, assessing their potential to serve Baptist witness in Wales
- Diligent work by the Trustees looking at moving us to CIO status, by the Ministry Board with a new Code of Ministerial Conduct, and by the Finance Committee on the Consolidated Budget
- A new Communication Strategy

Nominations for the 2022-23 Vice-Presidents were approved, namely Mr Bill Davies and the Rev Tim Moody and we pray that they would know God's hand with them as they prepare to lead us onwards.

Monthly BUW prayer time launched

If you would like to join a group of people from across Wales to pray for mission and ministry in our country on a regular basis, you're warmly invited to join us on zoom once a month on a Tuesday lunchtime. We will **pray from 1pm** for 30 minutes using this zoom link each time: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82102583626> See www.buw.wales/prayer for dates.

Baptist growth worldwide

There are now 51 million Baptists around the world, up from 36 million in 2009, according to the Baptist World Alliance, to which BUW is affiliated. This astonishing growth is mostly down to what has taken place in Africa, whose 21 million Baptists now account for almost half the worldwide number. There has also been significant growth in countries as varied as the Philippines, Belgium and Argentina, masking decline in most of Europe and North America.

If there is then such a thing as the 'average' Baptist, she is likely to be a young, black, poor African woman. In fact, the latest statistics show that over 17 million Baptists face food deficits and hunger in their countries, while over a million live in countries where the government places restrictions or persecutes Christian faith. There is then plenty to pray for our brothers and sisters worldwide, even as we are encouraged by the clear signs of growth.

More statistics can be found at www.issuu.com/baptistworldalliance/docs/baptist_world_trends



The Bible on France's bestseller lists



Lockdown life in France played out in much the same way as in the UK. But there were changes happening on a heart-level for many ordinary French people and strikingly, the Bible hit number one in sales of 'Philosophy and Religion' titles. "During Covid, there was a huge rise in people buying Bibles," explains Jérémie, a theology student supported by BMS. "To me, it signalled that a lot more people were asking themselves questions about what gave their lives meaning."

BMS counts France as among the least evangelised nations they work in. That's why John and Sue Wilson, BMS workers at Jérémie's church, have been so encouraged by the openness they've seen in people's approach to Christianity during the pandemic. The Wilsons were both surprised and delighted by numerous encounters like one they had with Lucas*, a student who turned up at their church with a Bible he had bought during lockdown and which he needed help to understand.

The pandemic certainly seems to have played a big role in the freshness they have felt in recent conversations with seekers, but they think there's more going on than the soul-searching of long, difficult lockdowns. A younger generation unburdened by preconceptions about church are beginning to ask life's big questions. "People may have seen religion in their families, but probably never experienced faith for themselves," says Sue.

You'll find prayer points for France here: https://issuu.com/bmsworldmission/docs/engage_issue_52_isuu/s/14220101

**name changed Words: Hannah Watson. Images: Courtesy of John Wilson and Jérémie Lockel*

And from around...
The World



Ten minutes with...

Ann Bowen Morgan

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 BUW trustees....

Thank you for talking to us, Ann. What kind of upbringing did you have and where?

I had a Welsh, Christian upbringing, in Rhyl on the North Wales coast. There was a Baptist background in the family on my Mam's side but Dad was Independent and so we went as a family to Carmel, the Independents' chapel. I was fortunate to attend Ysgol Glan Clwyd, the first Welsh-language comprehensive in its early days as well.

And so did you grow up as a Christian? How would you describe your journey as a Christian through the rest of your life so far?

Well, it was a thoroughly Christian background, but having left home I turned against. But then when I was a student in my second year there was a very active Christian Union in Bangor, and it was through their witness that I came to accept Jesus as my personal savior. And then there was a gradual process of growing as a Christian afterwards, through different things. I remember a very lovely period for example when we lived in Penygroes, near Ammanford and my husband was a minister in Calfaria, Tabor and Penrhiwgoch. The influence of the Apostolics was strong in that area and I had the privilege of seeing a number of the youth coming to believe and there was real life in our times of worship.

What a thrill that must have been. And it would be fair to say you've had a burden for the younger generation your entire life?

Well, yes. My career was as a teacher, at in primary schools in Llandudno and then here

in Lampeter. And I'm still teaching to an extent, but my field is now Welsh for adults.

You are very active in your locale in the church and in the community.

Lampeter is a very close-knit place, and we are fortunate in the churches where Densil my husband is a minister. It's a group of six chapels, and I try to be involved in the work as I can. I'm also glad to be able to contribute to the wider community through the town council and the Family centre – and yes, I had the special privilege of being Mayor in 2018-19 too! Organising activities through the medium of Welsh is very important to me.

And what is your latest role within the Union and your vision for that role?

I have been asked to take the reins as President of the Association (Carmarthen and Ceredigion) for this year. I have come in towards the end of the Covid period so there are challenges as a result. But we've also seen fruit, for example a series of zoom prayer meetings that is still running, and which is a good way to bring people together across a very wide geographical area. It is good to see new faces coming to those, and it is a means of building unity between us.

How can we pray for you and your work, Ann?

Pray for a youth worker for us here in the Lampeter area; we have a link with other churches here for that role and we have advertised without success to date. On the Association front, pray for the situation of the Sunday schools and the lost generation, and then in terms of the Union we will need to appoint two new trustees this year! Thank you.

Do you know of anyone who would be interested in serving as a BUW trustee? Email judith@ubc.cymru for further details.

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