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The

Messenger

SENT Norway adventures
Crossing Oceans to Tenby
BUW News
and more...

Editorial

AUTUMN 2023

note

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Greetings from the Llwyfan! It's a joy to introduce the latest edition of *The Messenger*, under the care of our new Missions and Communications Officer, Sioned Graves. On behalf of the readers of *The Messenger*, we extend her a warm welcome! Sioned started in the role in August this year, and we are already proud of her contribution to the team. Sioned introduces herself in her own words...



It's an honour to edit *The Messenger* for the first time! I joined the BUW team in August, after an unexpected conversation brought the job to my attention. After a bit of rebellion (I didn't want to follow in family footsteps!), I yielded to the sense that God was calling me **to return to Wales** personally to join in with His mission work here.

I was born in Cardiff (and spent a lot of time in Pembrokeshire growing up), but I have been in Durham for the past few years, working with a worship, prayer and missions organisation. It was exciting taking part in missions during this time, including 24 days of worship on the streets in Durham, and a powerful mission trip to Bethlehem. I saw the amazing power of prayer in this time, even amidst deep pain. I experienced the same in Wales this year, when I was part of a team interceding during the Llanw festival. We saw the Holy Spirit moving in amazing ways, and God was touching hearts deeply.

As a result of these experiences, I believe that **prayer is powerful**, and is so worth our time. It's a wonderful encouragement to see the fruit of prayer and God at work in this edition of *The Messenger* - the amazing story of Jonathan and Nela (p.4), the sense of God at work throughout Wales in our conferences (p.6), and Denis Young's story (p.8). The invitation to prayer echoes to us from these stories, the testimony of the saints through the ages, and **the invitation of Jesus**, who loves us: *'But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.'* (Matt 6:6). God loves us so much, and wants to work in our lives in beautiful ways, as well as powerfully in the world! Let's re-discover this 'powerhouse' (p.8), and see what will happen in Wales and beyond!

In Christ,

Rev. Judith Morris (General Secretary)

Sioned Graves (Missions and Communications Officer)

MISSIONS: SENT '23

Simeon Baker tells us about his experiences in SENT 2023, Norway...

After an early morning start on the 5th July, three 'younger' Ministers made their way to Cardiff Airport to represent the Baptist Union of Wales at the SENT 2023 missions conference in Stavanger, Norway. The European Baptist Federation (EBF) who organised the event had encouraged partner Unions to send younger leaders to take part.

Sian Elin Thomas (Crymych), Tim Moody (Risca) and Hannah Smethurst (Caernarfon) and the not so young Simeon Baker started, what was to be an eventful journey. Due to the worst storms in Amsterdam on record the airport was shut down and we were delayed for 24 hours. However, we finally made it to Norway a little tired but eager to learn all we could.

The full programme offered a rich experience of worship, speakers and seminar discussions. Highlights included worship led by Estonian friends; the Dutch 'Cooking Pastor' who prepared a meal

whilst speaking about how he uses cooking to share the love of God; the small church in Oslo who had grown by welcoming migrants as friends, and the unforgettable Dez Johnston from Scotland - the first preacher I've seen wearing 'Crocs' while preaching! It was humbling to hear from Ukrainian Baptists about new churches being planted in their country, a moving reminder of our call to be faithful in every situation.

It was humbling to hear about new churches being planted in Ukraine

A significant moment for all of us was when the younger generations were asked to stand and be prayed for by those who have been serving for many years.

The younger generations were asked to stand

In response, the younger generation asked those who were older to share their wisdom and experience so that together we might be SENT together into God's World.

It was a proud moment to see representatives from Wales standing among that group of people from all over Europe. All of us who attended counted it an honour to be there and are grateful to the Union for the opportunity to attend.

We thank God for our EBF family, and pray for wisdom for them as they respond with the light of Christ to difficult situations across Europe and the Middle East at present, including in Israel / Gaza, Nagorno-Karabakh and Ukraine. We pray 'His kingdom come' in these regions, and across Europe.



Maurício da Silva
The Cooking Pastor



CROSSING OCEANS

Carwyn Graves tells the story of one church and one couple following the call of God across the oceans...

“We knew we couldn’t afford a pastor, but we decided eight years ago to pray for one – to pray for God to do the impossible! And we’ve been on a journey since.” These are the words of Dave, a deacon at Deer Park Baptist, Tenby.

Deer Park is a unique congregation, with its ministry to summer holidaymakers and cavernous Gothic building. But despite a fruitful ministry over the years, recently the membership had dropped to single figures for the first time and there were no midweek activities. Things had become so challenging that conversations were taking place about the church’s future.

Around this time, a Filipino-English couple thousands of miles away in the US were visiting a conference as they explored what they thought would be a call to mission in Central or South America.

“We talked to Foursquare Missions International about our desire to go to the mission field,” Jonathan explains, “They asked the question, ‘Have you considered pastoring a church in Wales?’ Our first response was of course not – is Wales a mission field now?!” But the more they considered it, prayed and researched the more it seemed like God may have been preparing them for exactly that. And when they visited Wales in 2019, they felt at home.

Our response was:
“Of course not - is Wales a mission field now?!”



In December 2020, Nela and Jonathan were commissioned as missionaries to Wales by their sending church in California, but they did not know exactly to where. During the service, Nela received an unexpected vision of the ocean. In March 2021, she got another vision of an ocean as she was praying and that's when she thought she heard God saying he was calling them to Tenby. She also received Psalm 29 verse 3 - and Tenby’s motto is all about the sea. This was further confirmed by circumstances and prophetic words from others.

They arrived in Wales in summer 2021. At the same time, Dave heard of Jonathan and Nela’s arrival and invited them to come and meet the church. The relationship blossomed, with Jonathan establishing a weekly drop-in session for older people to receive help with their IT needs, building relationships with the community.

Nela received an unexpected vision of the ocean

“So, we saw God do the impossible!” Dave affirms. “The membership voted unanimously for Jonathan and Nela to

come here as joint pastors, which was just further confirmation. God has turned things around completely – we now have four mid-week outreaches, and pastors coming to work here full-time with us. It has all been built on prayer.”

Jonathan and Nela were inducted in a faith-filled service at Deer Park on Saturday 25th February 2023. Over the past few

“It has all been built on prayer”

months, numbers have increased, with 20-25 at most Sunday services over the summer months. They have rejoiced in accepting a new member into the church and they have also seen the start of multiple small local ministry and outreach efforts within the church. The church feels "alive"! They are also praying for ways to reach the younger generations, and want to keep prayer as a key foundation.

Let's pray for Deer Park, Jonathan and Nela as they embark on this new adventure of faith in Tenby together!

Gŵyl CAERSALEM

Caersalem Caernarfon came together in a special way this summer. Here are some of Hannah Smethurst's reflections...

July the 14th came with a lot of excitement for Caersalem's church family, with the return of 'Gŵyl Caersalem' (Caersalem Festival)! The weekend was organised with the intention of bringing the church family together to spend quality time outside of the church building. Despite the typical Welsh summer weather, a good crew came with their tents and coats to



enjoy meals, crafts, walks, building and racing rafts on the Seiont River, a night to interview and hear the testimony of one of our members, and a barn dance

on the Saturday night. One of the highlights of the weekend was the Sunday morning, when two members of Caersalem's church family were



baptised in the Seiont River. It was a privilege to witness their faith and the work God is doing in their lives. It was a weekend to remember! Praise God for it, and the privilege of being part of church family.

We pray every blessing on the Caersalem church family, especially as they continue to mourn the loss of Phil Wyman this summer, who was held dearly by all, and a key part of the church family.

NEWS FROM across

Introducing our Presidents for 23/24



Mr Bill Davies President of the Welsh-language Wing

Bill hails from Porthmadog, and presides over the Welsh-language wing this year. Bill has had a varied career, working

for Welsh Water, later for Gwynedd Council, and finally Careers Wales. Bill has now settled in Cardiff, and is a deacon in Tabernacle, Cardiff. In his presidential address, Bill emphasised that our Jesus is a **living Saviour!**

Rev. Tim Moody President of the English Wing

Tim comes all the way from London originally! He was brought up in Weston-Super-Mare and Cheddar. Tim was a



youth worker and a sports coach, before being called to Moriah Risca as a full-time minister. Tim carries a burden for children and young people. His encouragement for us this year is to consider how we can create a home for people of every age in our churches, especially the **children and young people** among us.

Remembering Summer Conferences

MOMENTUM '23

report by Simeon Baker

The 'Power of Story' was the theme that brought together almost 200 English-speaking Baptists from across Wales to hear stories of **God at work** in Wales this year. There were no shortage of opportunities to share those stories with one another whether from our past, present or even the future as we considered how best to use technology to share the good news far and wide.

Our guest speakers, Adrian and Bridget Plass, brought years of experience telling stories with honesty, humour and holiness. It was encouraging to see **children and young people** engage with the activities during the day along with some more heavyweight sessions looking at how well we know the Bible Story. Our friends from BMS World Mission helped us to see God at work across the World and we took a tour of Wales to hear just a few stories of what God is doing among them. All in all, the day was a joyful coming together and a powerful reminder that we are too are part of His Story.

**Save the date for Momentum next year:
Saturday 8th June 2024.**

Welsh-Language Conference

report by Bonni Davies

'Who is this' was the theme of this year's conference in Tabernacl, Cardiff on the 23-24 of June. In his address, Bill Davies, the new President asked us whether we had perhaps lost the '**Wow Factor**' of knowing that Jesus **was** and **is** the Son of God? If anyone was in doubt, they would surely have returned home from the Union encouraged in that truth, and that God is at work today. This reality became clear in the Business meeting, titled 'Investing in Tomorrow'. We had the opportunity to hear about has been happening across the Union, and every report was a testament to Christ's enduring work. It was encouraging to also hear as well about new

Staff changes

We are pleased to welcome **Sioned Graves** as our new Communications and Missions Officer. Sioned has started with us since August 2023. We will be sad to say good-bye to **Gwen Lye-Phillips** for the time being in December, as she goes on maternity leave. *We pray for both of them, with new seasons ahead!*

Talents of Hope Appeal

We are excited to have launched our new appeal for 2023/2024! The 'Talents of Hope' appeal supports the work of **Christian Aid in Zimbabwe**, particularly the work of the BRAC Project (Building Resilience through improving the Absorptive and Adaptive Capacity for Transformation of at-risk communities). BRAC helps communities to develop resilience against the challenges of climate change, by offering training in new farming techniques, helping communities diversify their sources of income, and equipping women in particular.

ministers, the effect of Forge training on our churches, and the way the Corporation now evaluates each and every chapel building to make the most of our resources, and to assess **their missional value** for the future. In the Missions session under Simeon Baker's care, it was wonderful to listen to Paula Hughes, Danni Worley, and Deb Stammers, as they described how God's hand was clearly at work in Salem Tonteg, Dolgellau and the Anglesey Association. Their method of witnessing was to listen to God's voice, create connections and talk to people in their own context and community. *God is certainly at work in Wales!*

We look forward to the next Welsh-Language Conference on the 23rd-26th June 2024!



NEWS

from across



To find out more, and for **resources** for churches, youth and children's groups, and instructions for giving, head to our website:

buw.wales/supporting-mission/appeals/

Getting to know...

Denis Young

We had the privilege of hearing some of the amazing stories that led Rev. Denis Young to faith as a young man, and later to ministry 69 years ago. Here is a part of his story...



How did you come to know Jesus?

My upbringing was like many who were brought up in Welsh villages, including going to chapel. Our family attended Bethel Drefach-Felindre Baptist Chapel, and I was a faithful attender. Ysgol Drefach was a church school, and that is where the village children went. We had to learn and recite the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles Creed! At 15, you would ordinarily get baptised in Bethel to become a member, and that's what happened to a lot of us. It's sad to say, however, that I had not had a living experience of the Lord. It was simply custom and routine. I was respectably religious, but to quote Gwenallt: 'Woe to us to know the words without knowing the Word.'

What changed? Something must have for you to then become a minister!

I had to leave Llandysul Grammar School early because help was needed at home. My Father had died early. So, at 15 I started working in a grocery shop, and then I worked nights on the railway. The Second World War had started, and rather than being forced to join the army like my brothers, I was sent to Bristol to work, because maintaining the trains was work 'of national importance'! It was a strange experience moving from the country to the middle of the 'blackout' and bombing in the city. Mercifully, I was sent back to Wales. There was a big turning point in Carmarthen. I was put to work as a stoker on the 'big engines' with a driver named Bill Thomas. I noticed that there was something different about him. He would doff his cap and give thanks before

eating his sandwiches in the shed alongside the other workers! He was not ashamed of his faith. He talked and sang naturally about His Redeemer, the Lord Jesus. I refused to listen. But God had different plans, and in the end I yielded! On my knees in my room, I asked for forgiveness for being so stubborn. I felt the chains breaking and my feet were free! Jesus had died on the cross in my place, and had risen!

A new season came. I left the railway and was appointed deputy manager to Edward D, a Baptist, in a shop called Star Aberteifi. This was a period of learning in the school of life, and really being tested in my faith. I learnt to lean on the Lord, and learnt to die to self! Gradually, the Lord called me to preach. The story of my journey to preach for the first time was a saga, but eventually I arrived in the Baptist College as a candidate for ministry. I was ordained to full ministry in Blaenycwm church, Rhondda Fawr in September 1954 (69 years ago).

What are the most important lessons you have learnt throughout your life and ministry?

One of the most important lessons for me is the importance of prayer. That is the 'power-house' according to one member in Blaenycwm! Something else that's very true is we only see each other from the outside, but so many problems are hidden, so we need the spirit of love and not judge 'so that we will not be judged'! For future generations, everything is in the hands of God, who is faithful and merciful, and has given us a love letter: His word! The Word is there for each of us, and the door of prayer is always open!

Diolch, Denis!