



HEART OF MONMOUTHSHIRE NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 4 – SUMMER '23



Rejoice! For the Lord is good;

His steadfast love endures for ever, and His faithfulness to all generations. (Psalm 100)

"Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, revel in him! Make it as clear as you can to all you meet that you're on their side, working with them and not against them. Help them see that the Master is about to arrive. He could show up any minute!

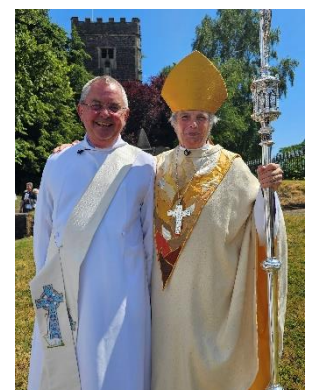
Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the centre of your life.

Summing it all up, friends, I'd say you'll do best by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious—the best, not the worst; the beautiful, not the ugly; things to praise, not things to curse. Put into practice what you learned from me, what you heard and saw and realized. Do that, and God, who makes everything work together, will work you into his most excellent harmonies."

So St Paul wrote to the church at Philippi in the translation from The Message Bible.



Here in the Heart of Monmouthshire we have much to rejoice and give thanks for: the ordinations of Rev'd Sarah and Rev'd Bill – both wonderfully joyous events, and of course the licensing of Rev'd Sue as she joins us and completes our team of Stipendiary Clergy.





The service, led by Bishop Cherry, was also a wonderfully joyous coming together from the across the MA to celebrate together, which as many people have said, had a real sense of unity and togetherness.

Now, after our first year as a new Ministry Area, we are beginning to experience the power of the Holy Spirit in many of the new endeavours and ventures we are putting in place, and in our lives together as the Church of God here in the Heart of Monmouthshire.

As we enjoy the fruitfulness of the summer months, looking forward to our harvest celebrations let us take time to savour and enjoy what God is doing amongst us, and look to the future with confidence and expectation to the new work that the Holy Spirit is seeking to complete amongst us.

***O Taste and see that the LORD is good;
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.***

With love and prayers for a fruitful and joyful summer,

Rev'ds Kevin, Sally, Sue, Sarah and Bill

News and Views from around the Ministry Area



St Aeddan's Bettws Newydd

Churches Unlocked

Friends of Bettws Newydd Church decided to be quite ambitious for Churches Unlocked and so maintained a presence there for the entire week.

In actual fact the church is always unlocked, apart from when it had to be closed during Covid restrictions.



We had special events throughout the week, beginning on Monday evening with a talk by Andrew Pike FSA about our rood screen and loft which is considered to be one of the most complete in Wales. He was able to talk to us, not only about our own, but also other fine roods around. Afterwards everyone enjoyed wine and 'nibbles'

On Tuesday afternoon Gareth Edwards, a freelance Ecologist and Landscape Consultant talked to us

about the churchyard, and in particular the different grasses and sedges found there.

On Wednesday we had a Local History morning, where we had a cannon ball, presumably from the Civil War which had been found in a field, plus many memories from the older residents of the village. We were also very fortunate to have recently been given copies of our church records, going back to 1741 which people enjoyed looking at.



On Thursday, Christina Evans, widow of Rev. Daryll Evans who wrote the book 'The Churchyard Yews of Gwent' came and spoke to us about how the book came to be written, and how he had gone about researching it.

On Friday we had no special event, but were able to welcome quite a lot of walkers to the church.

On Saturday, we had an informal morning where the organ was played for people to listen to as they looked around.

The key to the door to the rood loft was available throughout the week and many people took advantage of being able to go and have a look, including one group of American visitors who seemed almost as fascinated by the old keys as the access itself.

Throughout the week we were keeping a record of the number of birds heard in the churchyard using the 'Merlin' app and by the end of the week we had recorded 32 different species!

Lots of cake and drinks of coffee, tea and soft drinks had been handed out every day and we counted approximately 230 visitors (including two dogs on bikes!) It was lovely to get local visitors who had never been before as well as those from further away, including from overseas. Although we were not particularly trying to fund raise, and all events were free, our income rose by approximately £430 through the week.



All in all, although it was quite hard work we felt that it was definitely well worth the effort to have our church featured, and to encourage local support for the church, not only through the diverse range of events but also as a volunteering opportunity.

Clare Bradly & Lucy Prichard

Christchurch, Coed-y-paen



Christchurch is enjoying a gentle and peaceful spring and summer with our Services as usual bringing us all together during some wonderful weather. We have celebrated the wedding of Janette and Jason and look forward to Laura and James's wedding in September.

Two Rowan trees were planted in the Churchyard in early spring to replace the trees we sadly had to fell due to decay. This dry spell has meant several neighbours have been watering them, we are very grateful for their help and kindness.

We enter a new chapter for Christchurch in welcoming Rev.Sue Davies-Fletcher who will be our new Ministry Team Vicar, we all hope she will enjoy our small but lovely rural community.

We all thank Rev.Sally for her wonderful but somewhat short time spent with us .The Church today seems to constantly change and we have to keep adapting to many new ways .We all see the desperate need for some stability and good "Parish Priests " where those special and unique relationships are created, allowed to flourish and are ultimately treasured . These are the relationships that keep our Churches open and running well and in my view sustain our Faith in what is a very harsh world today.

We all hope these views and thoughts will be taken into consideration as we as volunteers try hard to keep Christianity going and our Churches open. As always I thank all our faithful volunteers who give so freely of their time and talents to keep Christchurch in such good order and so welcoming to all.

Cilla Davies



**St Peter's Goetre , with St Bartholomew's Llanover;
St Illtud's Mamhilad; St Matthew's Monkswood and
St Michael's Glascoed.**

We recently welcomed the Revd Sue Davies-Fletcher and her family to Nantyberry Rectory and the Goetre district and we look forward to her ministry in the Heart of Monmouthshire.



St Peter's, Goetre celebrated the Coronation with a most enjoyable cream tea on May 7th. The church was beautifully decorated in colours of red, white and blue and was open to visitors to view the displays the next day.



The Singing for Fun group enjoyed an evening of folk songs on May 16th. The regular meetings have now

drawn to a close, but occasional folk evenings will be held – do look out for adverts!



St Bartholomew's Llanover and St Illtud's Mamhilad took part in "Churches Unlocked" over two weekends in June. Both churches were delighted with the interest shown not only by local people but also from across the wider Ministry Area, the Diocese and beyond. One couple returned to St Illtud's for the first time since their wedding there 50 years ago! Many visitors had been unaware of these churches, others had tended graves there but had never ventured further. Without exception, all were hugely impressed with the architecture, ambience and the warm welcome at both churches.

St Illtud's laid on displays of the venerable history of the church, based on the research and publications of Revd Dr. John Daryll Evans, vicar there from 1983-91: the support from his widow Christina was appreciated. The ancient yew tree in Mamhilad churchyard is among those featured in his publication "The churchyard yews of Gwent" and was much admired.



At St Bartholomew's there was the opportunity to both hear and ring the bells and also to climb the church tower with its stunning views. Many thanks to Nick Jones the Bell Captain for arranging this, to Mair Probert for her organ recital and Bob Evans for his talks on the



history of the church.

The positivity and awareness raised by these and other events now poses the question "Where do we go from here?" We very much hope that this goodwill can help our churches to prosper and we look forward to developing ideas for the future.

A meeting was held at St Michael's, Glascoed on April 19th to discuss the future of the church. This was well attended and the overwhelming view was that the church should remain open and be an asset to the local community. It was recognised that serious fund-raising was necessary and the MGM 50:50 Lottery has been enthusiastically supported. The Early

Purple orchids and cowslips in the churchyard have been glorious this year; although the grass is not to be cut for some time for conservation purposes the churchyard is a haven of peace, worth a visit. Glascoed church now has a Facebook page and Twitter feed.

The Mystery of the Monkswood skeletons

Original Monkswood Church



On April 20th a group of over twenty friends and neighbours of St Matthew's church, Monkswood gathered in the churchyard to lay to rest the mortal remains of around 23 unknown people. The ceremony and



short church service, conducted by the Revd Kevin Hasler, was a culmination of a mystery that came to light in 2020. The community would like to thank Kate Churchill for her archaeological study, local dentist Miles Gladson for his forensic analysis of the teeth and Ted Williams for providing coffins

Three years ago, the west wall of the church had been repointed and a drain was being dug around the base when human remains were discovered. Although this was not unexpected in a churchyard, these were not in a conventional grave, but lying in a crouched position only 10cm below the surface very close to the church wall. Work had to stop and the archaeologist on site was asked to examine the matter further. Following permission to exhume the remains an archaeological investigation took place.

The next surprise was the excavation of not one skeleton but over 20. A small charnel pit was unearthed containing the remains of at least "21 disarticulated and co-mingled individuals". Closer to the surface was another burial with a cranium and ribs, arranged in a "skull and crossbones" position – a macabre comment on proceedings! Not surprisingly, local theories abounded, the more plausible being that we had found a plague pit or even some victims of the Battle of Pwll Melyn of 1405. Although we shall probably never know the exact circumstances, sufficient evidence has been gathered to shed some light on the mystery.

In 1883 the present church of St Matthew was opened. This had involved the demolition of the former church building dating from the 1780s, described in a contemporary newspaper report as "having been in a disgracefully ruinous state for many years". The current church extends further east than its predecessor, though foundations of the former church were exposed at the west end during the recent excavations. It is likely that graves were disturbed during the rebuilding process and their contents reburied, perhaps in haste. Although contemporary Vestry meeting

minutes exist for the early 1880s these focus on the costs of the building project, not on more distasteful matters.

Archaeological analysis has produced some approximation of the date of the remains and the ages of the individuals. The excavation revealed an oval pit with vertical walls, cut into the subsoil, containing not only the bones but also fragments of bricks, mortar, 19th century pottery and even some rusty iron coffin handles. This rubble indicates that it was contemporary with the rebuilding of the church. Many of the bones were in good condition, suggesting that they had once been protected by coffins and had only been exposed to the acid soil more recently. A study of pelvic bones suggested that there were almost equal numbers of males and females, while some remains were of children and at least one infant – a typical cross section of the population. The report concludes that the original burials could date from the 1600s until well into the 19th century, though probably not those from living memory as the remains would have been reinterred more respectfully.

Mandible examination of 15 individuals revealed 1 infant, 4 children aged between 3 and 11 years and 10 adults. Some adults had tooth decay, some had gum disease and wear and tear of tooth surfaces, suggesting a coarse diet and a high sugar intake (including in liquid form) in some cases. Several adult jaws had signs of professional tooth extraction as there were no broken fragments, but none had fillings. The high standard of extractions suggests that the people lived after 1700, a conclusion also borne out by the study of the coffin handles found on the site.

We are most grateful to Kate Churchill, archaeologist, and Miles Gladson dentist, for their painstaking work and keen interest in the project. As 2023 is the 140th anniversary of St Matthew's present building we hope to hold an event later in the year to highlight some more of its history. Meanwhile, may our long-forgotten neighbours rest in peace once again.

A more joyful occurrence in St Matthew's was the recent wedding of Jonny and Hannah Hampshire. The weather was variable, but with glimpses of sunshine. We crammed 130 people into Monkswood church so it was cosy!

Lesley Evans





St Madoc's Llanbadoc

There isn't a lot to report at Llanbadoc at the moment. Beneath the shade of the magnificent cedar trees, buttercups, moon daisies and other wild flowers have been allowed to flourish. Tree maintenance is on-going with the holly losing lots of its leaves in the "June drop".

We are looking forward to a baptism and a wedding during the summer months.

On July 13th the "Forward Together" service was led by Christopher Hill, who welcomed people with an account of "To which St. Madoc is this church dedicated"?

The service followed the pattern of the Order of Evening Prayer with the addition of the Litany and the Creed of St. Athanasius.

For some of us, it was a while since we had attended an Evening Prayer Service. We are indebted to Sue Russell for stepping in at the last minute to play the organ. It was good to meet and socialise with friends from other churches and we would like to thank everyone who attended and sang so heartily.

Hilary Morgan & Rosemary Evans



St Tegfedd, Llandegfedd

It is heartening in this 400th anniversary of William Byrd – one of the greatest composers of the English Renaissance – that there is so much excellent liturgical music happening in the Ministry Area at present.



I am delighted that little old Llandegfedd has been able to play a small part in this 21st Century mini-renaissance. We try to have two choral events each year – one in spring and one in autumn. This year, an ad-hoc choir accompanied a beautiful arrangement of the Seven Last Words on Good Friday, with musical offerings including the Lotti *Crucifixus*, Allegri *Miserere*, and the first movement of Pergolesi's *Stabat Mater* – as well as other pieces by Tallis, Byrd and Stainer.

We have three more musical events this year – make a note in your diaries!

- On Sunday 24 September at 10.30, Holy Communion will be celebrated with the glorious 1662 setting. We will match Cranmer's immortal prose with the Mass setting by Byrd for 4 voices.
- On Friday 1 December we will sing an Advent evensong, probably at about 4pm (but watch this space for more details). That service will

include the wonderful Palestrina *Matins Responsory* (“I look from afar!”).

- Our annual carol service in mid-December (exact date TBC) has become a musical highlight in the area. We feature the junior choir of the Priory Singers, called *Just Sing!* directed by the excellent Peter Banks and featuring young, talented musicians from Newport.

In the words of J S Bach, “The final aim and reason of all music is nothing other than the glorification of God and the refreshment of the spirit.” Come to Llandegfedd and do both!

Robert Aitken



St. John's Church, Llandenny

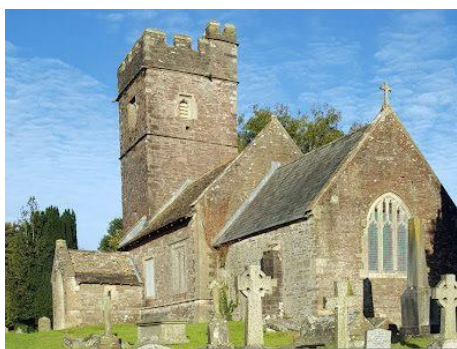
On Saturday 10 June we were enjoying a slightly cooler day as we prepared for our Summer Strawberry Tea at The Mardy, Llandenny by the kind invitation of Mike and Sue Boret.

The bunting was put up and plates of food and bottles of wine arrived. There was a strawberry treasure hunt for the children and plenty of tables and chairs so everyone was able to have a great time relaxing and catching up with each other.

Mike and Sue will soon be moving. We thanked them for all their kindness to us all in the village of Llandenny and wished them health and happiness in their new abode.



Sue Russell



St Cybi's Church Llangybi

Our Churches Unlocked experience. At our church meeting in January, we heard for the first time that we had been nominated to take part in the South Wales Churches Unlocked

Festival in June 2023 - one of only ten in the Monmouth Diocese. Our church is always open



every day. Would this invitation change anything? Our team started meeting in February, first generating ideas and then making them happen. Drew Morton shared his vision of our church as a musical venue, and invited some top-class musicians to demonstrate the acoustics. Cheryl Considine and Irene Cameron inspired our 'Flower People' to spring clean and decorate church and churchyard while Irene Rogers unlocked some of the secrets of our churchyard. Our local art group ran their exhibition 'All things bright and beautiful' in the village hall, where also John Kingsley presented his faithful portrait of the church for auction. The team kept growing, even during the Festival week, when health problems forced Sally and ourselves to take a back seat, and many generous friends stepped in, providing hospitality, and leading prayer times. Our team was bigger than our regular congregation, which gives us hope for the future of village churches like ours. Being 'unlocked' isn't just about the church door. It's also about having porous boundaries between church and community. Our children's activities certainly weren't a traditional Sunday school, but stories were told and connections made. I'm sure Sally and all clergy will agree that you can only have so much tea and cake (or even cheese and wine!) so some of our events were officially adjourned to the White Hart for refreshments! Praying together helps. Our yellow ribbon tree was hung with memories and prayers before, during, and after the



Festival. Daily prayer supported not only our programme but also those of us who missed the events but who nevertheless felt included. As a family, we believe God answered prayers that week, and are very



thankful. Sunday evening Compline, ending the Festival, was especially moving. Gathering to Faith Pike's harp-accompanied songs was a spiritual experience in itself. Celebrating the deep heritage of our church, we soon realised how little we really knew. Leaflets and online information revealed a muddle of different dates and 'facts'. But we went ahead with walks and talks anyway without any attempt at correction or rationalisation. Stories are worth telling without overthinking them. Camino Cybi took us from church to our holy well, the sites of no fewer than three castles, and Bethel Chapel. Cybi's story begins in conflict with political power. Castles crumble in succession; radical protest movements like 'Chapel' end up literally being domesticated. We were very grateful to David Addams-Williams for allowing access to his ancestral castles, and to Les Taylor for sharing his knowledge

with about 20 'pilgrims', and Jane Williams for showing us around the old chapel. Revd Pamela Love introduced us to the many layers of history in paint and plaster on the church walls, and to her own part in its discovery and preservation. David Callander of Cardiff University tried to answer our question 'Who was Cybi?' It's impossible to really know much about someone who might have lived 1500 years ago. But we do know that something new happened 500 or so years ago. The parish changed its name from Tregrug to Llangybi. The church was 'upgraded' with wall paintings and rood screen. Around the same time, a new liturgy was composed, celebrating Cybi as 'The Sun of Cornwall, Light of Ireland, and Splendor of Wales': was it sung at the dedication of our wall paintings? Music: St Cybi's resonated throughout Festival week to voice and instrument, solo and ensemble. The gamble of simultaneous scheduling paid off on our first Sunday, with walkers and Anna George's listeners eventually joining together for an abundance of cakes and tea. Byrdsong and Llandenny Strings turned church into a rehearsal studio (not for the first time). The young Bethan Cole gave a memorable virtuoso performance on both harp and flute. 'Remote' Quartet gave us a most accessible afternoon of music. John Love ascended the organ loft and demonstrated what our antique Bevington pipe organ can still achieve. Sadly however Carole Kinsey lost her voice and had to postpone her Welsh folk songs: dyn ni'n edrych ymlaen ati tro nesaf! Advertising: Sally designed a festival banner, posters, and our programme, which our 'Llangybi Matters' team was redeployed to deliver during the last week in May. All our events were advertised online via the Churches Unlocked website, whose webmaster Mary was very responsive to last-minute amendments. Sarah Perons of Llandaff Diocese organised some broadcast publicity for us on BBC Radio Wales and Premier Christian Radio. We made full use of the Llangybi Village Facebook page and all our village noticeboards. But there is nothing better than a buzzing round the hive as momentum builds. If we're going to develop St Cybi's as a venue for village and cultural events, we need better facilities. We hired portaloos for the week, located in the lower churchyard - quite a hike from the church door! Serving tea both indoors and out demanded ingenuity in the absence of a tap or kitchen and somewhat random distribution of power sockets. And thanks to our 'Friends of St Cybi's 200 Club' we now have three portable ramps to assist wheelchair users into church via the vestry path. Upgrading this access route was flagged as a priority by our architect at the last Quinquennial Survey, just before the Pandemic. Churches Unlocked has given us a new vision for the future of St Cybi's, but also a realism about what it will need to deliver it

Peter Foden

.....and a view from Sue

On any day of the week you will find the church in Llangybi open for anyone who wishes to go in; but when we received the invitation to Churches Unlocked week in June, we couldn't resist.

This was the second year the Diocese had initiated the festival, this year extending it to Monmouth. About twenty churches were asked to participate, scattered across the area.

At our first planning meeting we were reassured that all we would need to do was have the church open with some refreshments available and someone there to welcome visitors. . . But then imaginations started firing, and the project grew until we all began to wonder what we had let ourselves in for!

No way back! So led by Rev'd Sally and Peter Foden we took the plunge. A programme of daily events included musical performances, talks about the history, wall paintings, burial ground, the holy well; children's activities; bell ringing; community art exhibition; a history walk, and very importantly, teas!

We loved it! Meeting people from far and wide, who were going from church to church exploring them all.

It was all rounded off with the most beautiful Compline service led by Rev'd Sally on the Sunday evening. We now know we can do it, and that it is hugely enjoyable and worthwhile. Yes, it was a lot of work, especially for our leading lights, but would we do it again? Definitely!

Thank you, Team!

Sue Hiscock



St John's Llanhennock

We have had our fair share of minor issues recently, for example with a ceiling tile suspended over the congregation like the sword of Damocles; church wall repairs and grass cutting have also been on the agenda. However, our energies have also been concentrated on positive plans and activities.

Two trees have been planted in the churchyard to commemorate the coronation of King Charles III, a beech and a copper beech, with accompanying brass plaques. The trees should last for centuries, if not the plaques.



A number of church members are also members of the Llanhennock Ladies' Group, which has supported many of our projects, for example by providing the tombola for our Open Gardens event. This takes place on 15th July, and combines the viewing of some splendid local gardens with an equally splendid afternoon tea.

Unfortunately 15th July, a date already changed due to the vagaries of the weather, clashes with the Diocesan Vision Workshop. We hope to be able to catch up with this at the second session on 30th September. We have been delighted to support the services in Raglan and Goetre for the Rev'd Sarah's first Eucharist and the Rev'd Sue's licensing by Bishop Cherry.

Chris Edwards



St. Peter, Paul & John, Llantrisant & Llanllowell

Here in Llantrisant our unusually large late medieval church has spent most of the last few months slumbering quietly in the early summer sun. Just as she has done for most of the 450 plus years since she was remodelled during the Reformation and its imposing tower was built.

The dedication to St Peter, Paul and John is long standing, but those names did not give rise to the name Llantrissant (or Llantrisant). It is not clear when the change was made but the original Three Saints are thought to have been S's David, Padern and Teilo: known as the Three Visitors.

Bringing us up to date we should report that the church is open all the time and welcomes visitors; we continue to have fortnightly Services when we are often joined by friends from other churches. A very happy local wedding was hosted in June, with 150 guests and In July there will be a baptism, our first for several years.

Sandy Blair



St Cadoc's Raglan

The church has hosted community events including a charity abseiling down the tower raising money for Raglan Scouts' trip Italy – Rev'ds Kevin and Sarah were among the many people of all ages who bravely undertook this task to support this worthy cause.



to



In the evening of that same day the St Cadoc's Millennium Chimes hand bell ringers joined Talgarth male voice choir to provide evening of musical entertainment in the church as part of the Raglan Music Festival.

Jenny Swattridge



Raglan Mothers' Union.

In June we were blessed by our speaker, Revd Carol Taplin, the Chaplain of the Aneurin Bevan Health Authority. She spoke from the heart about working during Covid and with compassion about the situation. We were all touched by her honest approach to the situation and thank her for her work in a difficult situation.

The branch continues to support A&E by making Emergency packs for those attending hospital in an emergency, and volunteers from the branch support the Contact Centre in Abergavenny. The Branch has contributed to AFIA (Away From It All) holidays enabling two families this year to have a holiday together in South Wales.



In July the members and friends were invited to the 'Summer of Hope Appeal' Tea at Forge Cottage, Llandenny on Tuesday 11 July at 2.00pm.

Everyone from any community is welcome to our activities. We meet on 2nd Wednesday of the month.

For further details about Mothers' Union activities.

Contact: Sue 01291 690380

Sue Russell



The Priory Church of St Mary, Usk

On 7th May The Priory Church of St Mary joined the rest of Usk's

community in Bridge Street celebrating the Coronations of King Charles and his Queen Consort in style and with great enthusiasm.



Willing volunteers from the church provided a free crown making workshop for children - this proved extremely popular and by 3.00

so much more than Sundays

bell ringing

ECO CHURCH

Bronze Eco Church Award Certificate

Open the Book

Supporting projects and local charities.

Family church

ladies group

activities with local Ukrainian families

ladies choir

Little Hill Growing Group

h i s t o r y g r o u p

contact Rev.Sally if you would like to join in.
revdsally@gmail.com 07813 264429

p.m. 100 crowns had been decorated, assembled and worn with pride by participants, some of whom modelled their crowns in the Fancy dress competition!

At 6.00 p.m. a crowd of over 200 people flocked into the church for a joyful service of Celebration and Thanksgiving, which was a truly ecumenical and community focussed event. Following a warm welcome by Rev'd Sally, St Mary's Choir and Monmouthshire Community Choir, accompanied by organ and trumpet, joined forces to lead the congregation in a magnificent rendering of Vaughan Williams setting of 'The Old Hundredth' (All People That on Earth Do Dwell), originally arranged for the Coronation of the late Queen Elizabeth II. This was followed by joyous congregational hymn singing, with readings and prayers delivered by representatives from all three Usk churches, the Prison and the Town Council. St Mary's Choir sang two songs fit for a King and the congregation joined in enthusiastically with the Community Choir's bilingual Welsh Medley.

The service concluded with closing prayers offered by Father Bernard, the two National Anthems and a retiring collection which raised an amazing £584 shared between the church and the Usk Food Kitchen. A big thank you to all who participated in the service and to everyone who donated so generously.



In June **Usk Beaver Scouts** visited St Mary's and with the aid of Carol's clever picture' treasure hunt' and their own enquiring minds, explored, discovered and learned more about the church than many of us can claim to know !!

Strawberry Tea



Fifty members and friends of our church family gathered in the Centenary Hall for fellowship and a sumptuous Strawberry tea.

A raffle raised money for St David' Hospice - prizes included a wonderful hamper , with thanks to the Little Hill Growing Group , and a beautiful cake baked and donated by Usk Town Mayor, Steve O'Brien who, with his consort Peter Hall, joined us for tea. A good time was had by all!



Team St Mary's

More HoMMA News

Meet and Greet

In June Local wardens from many of the churches in HoMMA met and put names to faces and were blessed by a beautiful still sunny evening in Llandenny as they chatted and shared with each other.



This provided a wonderful opportunity for us to share our thoughts and experiences as local wardens whilst feasting on cheese and wine!

Many thanks to Sue and Graham Russell for hosting us in their beautiful garden.



Churches Together

The ordinations of Rev'ds Sarah and Bill on 24th June were celebrated in St Cadoc's Raglan the following day by clergy and congregation from across the MA , when Rev'd Sarah presided over her first Eucharist, assisted by Rev'd Bill as Deacon, with an anthem sung by the combined choirs of St Cadoc's and St Mary's, Usk. This was followed by fellowship and lunch in the hall.



There was a packed church on the following Sunday at St Peter's, Goetre, for the licensing of Revd Sue Davies-Fletcher. The wonderful singing and inspirational sermon from Bishop Cherry on the gifts of the Spirit especially stood out, and again this service was followed by a shared lunch.



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lunch.

We look forward to coming together for worship at our next joint MA service, in St Mary's Usk on July 30th

Introducing Gemma Gabrys Heart of Monmouthshire Administrator

Since our last newsletter the Heart of Monmouthshire Ministry Area Council (MAC) have obtained a grant from the Diocesan Office to pay for an Administrator for the Council. Following usual procedures, we advertised locally and through the Diocese and interviewed two people who applied for this role. We were delighted to appoint Gemma Gabrys who is a member of the choir in Usk and so known to many. Gemma started working with us on May 1st, doing 7 hours per week. Currently she works from her own company office in the Sessions House in Usk.

Gemma is currently coming to terms with learning about the various systems – website, ChurchSuite, myfundaccounting etc. to enable her to help the members of the Clergy as well as our Treasurer and myself at various times. She is updating the website and formalising some of the paperwork surrounding events in the Ministry Area. As we don't currently have anyone on the MAC as Communications lead, Gemma is soaking up some of this work.

Group purchasing of various items including paper, church candles, communion wine etc. is another thing on her agenda and as many of you will have received emails from her asking about electricity supplies in our various churches, we hope to be able to obtain better pricing and savings for everyone.

Weddings, Baptisms and Funerals as well as the weekly rota of services are all being looked at to try to streamline the processes involved and thus be able to make people more aware of what is happening in our busy area.

Gemma can be contacted on admin@heartofmonmoutshirema.org should anyone wish to organise any of these life events.

We welcome Gemma and the work she is doing for us and trust that you too will welcome, encourage and respond to messages from her

.Kay Spencer Lay Co Chair

Hello! I'm Gemma, and I'm thrilled to be part of the HoMMA!

A bit about me - I am married to Adam, with one almost three year old daughter Blaze, and another little one on the way, due at the end of August/early September.



We moved to the area about two and a half years ago after the birth of Blaze, to be closer to my parents who have lived in Usk for 10 years or so now. Along with the geographical re-location, both Adam and I joined our family business based in Usk - "Kid Rapt." Kid Rapt works to supply child safety or accident prevention equipment like safety gates and cupboard locks to local authorities and government funded projects.

I've been in administration in various forms for much of my working life. Prior to Kid Rapt working for the John Lewis Partnership in their recruitment and resourcing team which I absolutely loved.

Outside of work I love to sing and have tried to take as many opportunities to sing with lots of different types of choirs over the years, choral, community and rock, but for me the most worthwhile and passionate songs are songs of worship. It supports my faith so much. I currently sing with the ladies choir at St Mary's Church which is such a joy.

Within the HoMMA I've also been part of the start-up and opening of the Usk Baby and Toddler Group with which we are thrilled - to see it support so many families in the local area is so rewarding and a great way for families, who might not do so already, to connect with the church.

I try to take Blaze to as many services as I can (when I'm not singing with the choir) as it's important to me that she finds church a familiar and loving place. I've been overwhelmed by the welcome that we have received. If you see us please feel free to come up and say hello. We would love to meet you.

Gemma Gabrys

Ministry Area Website

Having introduced Gemma I can now let you know that one of the things she is working hard on is the Ministry Area Website! This is now becoming a great source of information – meet the Team, Clergy and Council, Our Churches, Our Mission and importantly the calendar of events. No need to wonder when the next service is at a particular church, or to see if there is anything going on at the weekend – just click on Heart of Monmouthshire in your web browser and it will come up for you.

I urge you to take a look – and if what you are looking for isn't there, then please let Gemma or myself or anyone else on the Ministry Area Council, know and we can get it corrected.

It is a work in progress so your comments (constructive please), on how it could be improved are welcomed.

Kay Spencer

Chaplaincy tent at Usk Show

September 9th is Usk Show day. The Ministry Area provides a Chaplaincy Tent where we provide free tea, coffee, soft drinks and biscuits together with baby changing and feeding facilities and something for children to do together with a place to rest and chat.

If anyone is willing to give an hour or two of time to help with making tea, washing up or just chatting to people who visit us, please could they contact me , the coordinator, by text on 07952 754744.

Clare Bradly

Finally - Many thanks to all who have contributed to this edition of our newsletter, with so much positive and heart-warming news and informative and engaging articles.

Contributions are invited for the next issue, (Harvest) to arrive with me on or before September 30th - (as an attachment in word with photos attached separately if possible) usksarah@tiscali.co.uk . Diolch.

Sarah Byford - Editor

