

CIRCUIT NEWS

Christmas Special 2021

CIRCUIT NEWS AND VIEWS FOR BANGOR & HOLYHEAD METHODIST CIRCUIT

THE MISSION OF THE BANGOR & HOLYHEAD CIRCUIT IS TO LIVE OUT GOD'S WORD AND SHARE THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST BY LOVING AND CARING WHOLEHEARTEDLY THROUGH SERVICE AND WORSHIP WITH FUN, FELLOWSHIP AND JOY FOR ALL THE CHURCH FAMILY AND THE COMMUNITY.

A Christmas Message from the Methodist Church

Advent and Christmas 2021

Great joy for all the people

But the angel said to them,

“Do not be afraid; for see –
I am bringing you good news
of great joy for all the people...”

Luke 2:10 (NRSV)

During the past two years' lockdowns, communities have become further disconnected and dispersed. People are tired and many are living in more difficult circumstances due to the ongoing pandemic. Internationally, many people live in danger; from threats of war to wildfires. But the message of Jesus' birth at Christmas continues to be one of hope in our troubled times. God's love is stronger than our fears. And as we aim to be an increasingly inclusive, evangelistic and justice-seeking Church, this is, importantly, a joyful message “for all the people”.



Recognising everyone's fatigue and the Covid-19-related uncertainty that surrounds the approach of Christmas, this year the Methodist Church is encouraging congregations to simply reach out to their communities with the angel's message – to near neighbours and to people living on the margins. To reconnect, and assure everyone that the Methodist Church is praying for them and cares about their community and concerns.

Christmas Newsletter 2021

*It's the most wonderful time of the year!
With the kids jingle belling
And everyone telling you "be of good cheer."
It's the most wonderful time of the year!*



Despite what Andy Williams keeps telling us year in year out, the simple truth is that for many people Christmas is far from being the most wonderful time of the year, however often we're told or however much we think that we should be having a great time. Whilst very young children may continue to gaze in wonder at this magical season and whilst impossibly beautiful models may smile through the most ridiculous perfume adverts, as we get older many of us find Christmas an increasingly difficult period to negotiate.

There may be several entirely logical reasons for why we should feel this way:

- we know that the world is in a mess and it's hard simply to switch our brains off, ignore global warming, the refugee crisis, the COVID pandemic and all the rest, and simply have a good time, when we know full well that for millions across the world life is a daily ongoing battle with no obvious sign of anything getting any better;
- or it may be because we miss special people around the table at this time of year – family members, who are either living a long way from home or who are no longer with us at all, or (which can sometimes seem worse), family who are living very close to us but who do not want to share in our festivities;
- or it may be because the memory of Christmases from long ago with all its fun and excitement, when we ourselves were small or had young children at home, makes our current celebrations seem rather pathetic and forced.

And yet, despite all of these things being true, we know that the message of Christmas is one of glad tidings of great joy. So how can we re-connect with that truth and feel its power? Perhaps by remembering that when Christ came to earth, the world was just as dangerous a place as it still is and the future looked no less bleak and uncertain then as it does now. Perhaps by taking care, in our remembering of the story, not to focus only on the happy bits (the angels, the animals, the star) but to take seriously the darker bits too (the Roman overlords, the scandal of Mary's pregnancy, the death squads of Herod), which actually help us see the light all the clearer. If we could do this then we might realise how similar life is now to the time of Jesus and how we need God to come and be with us today just as much as God's people needed him then.

There's a poem I love by Madeleine L'Engle, an American Christian who died in 2007. Many American Christians didn't like her because she firmly believed that in God's good time all people, 'all the strayed and stolen sheep; all the little lost ones' as she put it, would know

God's salvation and not just those lucky ones, who happened to have been given the opportunity and grace to know Christ and respond. She understood that in this life many people were never in a position to respond in such a way, but that did not stop God entering our world and theirs. This understanding informs her Christmas poem 'First Coming,' a poem which is brutally honest about how hard life is for many and yet still believes that it is possible to respond to God's love with rejoicing. I pray that you are able to find that same joy in the midst of this tarnished world and help others to feel it too.

May you have a blessed Christmas,

Nick

First Coming by Madeleine L'Engle

*He did not wait till the world was ready,
till men and nations were at peace
He came when the Heavens were unsteady
and prisoners cried out for release.
He did not wait for the perfect time.
He came when the need was deep and great.
He dined with sinners in all their grime,
turned water into wine. He did not wait
till hearts were pure. In joy he came
to a tarnished world of sin and doubt.
To a world like ours, of anguished shame
He came, and his Light would not go out.
He came to a world which did not mesh,
to heal its tangles, shield its scorn.
In the mystery of the Word made Flesh
the Maker of the stars was born.
We cannot wait till the world is sane
to raise our songs with joyful voice,
for to share our grief, to touch our pain,
He came with Love: Rejoice! Rejoice!*



Anna Chaplaincy – is God calling you?

For several years now the germ of an idea has been growing within the hearts of some people within our Circuit. Despite many things that have made it hard for this seed to grow it has not disappeared, but has lain in the darkness waiting for the moment when God would bring it out into the light. That time, I believe, has now come.



When I arrived in the Circuit in the late summer it was clear that there was a ferment of mission ideas that the Circuit Leadership Team were nurturing on our behalf, that had come out of conversations held across the churches over many years, supported by the prayers of many people. Covid times have made it hard for everyone to keep focused on outreach and for many it has understandably been more a time for holding on rather than for moving out. So I want to pay tribute to all those amongst you, who have kept faith and not forgotten that lovely phrase about ‘those who do the best of things in the worst of times’ but who have been inspired to remain focused on how we will reach out to those in need in our communities when the time is right. On every occasion when it has been a temptation simply to bemoan how hard life is for our congregations at the moment, I thank God that you have remembered that we, the Church, are the only organisation that exists for the benefit of those who do not belong to it.

The phrase ‘Anna Chaplaincy’ may be one that you’ve heard about recently. If you haven’t, then remember this moment when it first struck your consciousness, because we will all hear a lot more about it in the coming years. Anna Chaplaincy takes its name from the prophet Anna, mentioned almost in passing by Luke towards the end of the Christmas story. In three verses we learn that she was a prophet, widowed young, and now at the age of 84 a permanent resident in the temple, praying and fasting as she awaited the salvation of God.

Her life of faithful and hopeful witness has given rise to a title for men and women who have felt that God is calling them to a ministry of friendship with older people: to come alongside people in their later years of life, to build relationships of trust with them and with sensitivity to serve their spiritual needs: this is what we mean by Anna chaplains and as a result of recent meetings exploring how this ministry might be exercised in our own area we are now actively encouraging people in our churches, who feel that God might be calling them to work with older people, to test that vocation.

We live in a country where the proportion of people aged over 65s is growing at an incredible rate, as is the number of people who are no longer able to live independently or who have become less active than when they first retired. These are people of the so-called Fourth Age, who have enormous life experience, often with a great love for God, but who now need spiritual care as they enter their last years. This spiritual care is often identified as the need to give and receive love, to be creative, to have their hope and belief sustained and to find peace. The sad fact is that many of these people do not receive such spiritual care and the Church is now trying to address that by promoting the work of Anna chaplains.

In January and February the Co-ordinator of the work of Anna Chaplaincy in Wales, the Rev’d Sally Rees, an Anglican priest based in Crickhowell, begins a series of six sessions to help people discern their call to this ministry. We are looking for people who want to join that course and are inviting anyone who wishes to learn more about it to join us for a **Zoom meeting on December 15th at 7.30pm.**

If you know you are interested please pass your name to myself, Heather or one of the Circuit Stewards and we will give you the details you need to join the meeting (please also let us know if you cannot access Zoom and we will find another way to talk to you). If you are not sure if God is calling you to this work then please pray about it.

Nick Sissons

A Special Christmas Time

Lesley Owen Penmaenmawr

Christmas time was always special
When I was very small
The nativity scene, the Christmas tree.
The Magic or it all.

Then as I grew older,
There was not time to think
Only “ have I got enough potatoes
Is there enough to eat and drink?
What happens to that magic
That special Christmas Joy.
Do we only feel it
When we’re a little girl or boy?

Now that I’m much older
I watch my grandchild, nearly three,
Eyes open wide in wonder
Gaze at the Christmas Tree.

We tell the well loved story
So ancient and so old Of
The babe within a manger
Wise men with gifts of Gold.

Forgotten now all problems
All worries and all pain
In our house there’s a little child
Christmas is special once again.



Being kind to planet Earth -

How do respond to the challenges of COP 26 this Christmas.

We have included in this Newsletter a number of articles from people around the circuit who are giving us some ideas of what actions we may take.

Nick Sisson's son Jack gives us some simple ideas here, I know that these thoughts are echoed by a lot of young adults. If you talk to the Rainbows and Brownies that meet in some of our churches they are all very passionate about using less plastic and they don't hold back on telling the adults off!!

Another mince pie anyone???

One of the things I most look forward to at Christmas is all the food that's on offer! With so much food, there's a few ways we can eat more sustainably this year. The meat industry contributes to 15% of overall emissions and so shifting towards a more plant based diet will help reduce the emissions from the food we eat. Whilst we don't all have to make such a drastic change as not having turkey this Christmas, here's a couple of ideas to consider. Maybe try including 1 or 2 meat free meals over the festive period or using veggie sausages for your 'pigs' in blankets - I'd recommend the Richmond meat free range. Journey miles for the foods we eat can also be something to reduce this year. Buying local, seasonal produce will decrease air miles giving more sustainable meals as well as supporting local businesses! My last tip for a sustainable Christmas is about minimising food waste. We can all try to reduce the amount of food we have to throw away this year. So maybe when you're peeling spuds for Christmas lunch think about peeling one less or, as is my role in the family, you'll have to end up eating one more!

Jack Sissons

Do you really need those Christmas Crackers? Is there something more creative you can do, perhaps using materials you find around your house? How about a Christmas hat completion instead using the wrapping paper from the gifts you have received. A lot of Christmas sweets and chocolates use a lot more wrapping than standard items, do we really need those special packs or can we be creative using things we have to make presents extra special.



This Christmas, waste not want not.....less is more John Hay

In response to Glasgow's COP26 Climate Change Conference in November when we prayed for big things from our leaders, I thought it would be good to consider some of the ways we can each do our bit to help climate change too.....

One topic raised at Glasgow's COP26 was **food waste**, which is one of the lesser-known enemies of the planet, creating six times more greenhouse gases than aviation. Besides the waste of precious resources used in growing, packaging and transporting the food in the first place, when left to rot in landfill, food waste produces methane, a greenhouse gas more potent than carbon dioxide. Globally a third of food never makes it to the table and in the UK, homes discard 4.5 million tonnes of it every year. If everyone stopped doing that for one day, it would have the same impact as planting 500,000 trees!!!!

In a very useful article in Waitrose's free magazine, Weekend, dated 7/10/21, Anna Shepard shared tips to reduce food which are in 4 different categories – **Planning, Shopping, Leftovers** and **Storage**. This is relevant anytime but particularly so during the Christmas period, when with family and friends round, food plays a central part in our festivities.

Planning

Take stock before you shop. Assess the contents of your cupboards, fridge and freezer and make a note of what needs using up. You also might find something already lurking there you thought you might need.

Plan a weekly menu. A good way of making sure you don't buy more than you are going to use. If that is too 1950's for you, you might find a note on the fridge with items that need using up and prioritizing use-by-dates to be helpful. If meat is nearing its use by date, cook or freeze it to extend its life.

Shopping

Buy less food. Obvious really. Spending a few minutes crunching the numbers of who is coming and when and not getting more than you actually need, will reduce food waste and save you money!
Buy less and use up what's already in your cupboards.

Eat less meat. Try at least one meal this Christmas which does not involve meat.

Leftovers

Turn leftovers into great meals by building up a repertoire of recipes you can make from leftovers.

Be imaginative and where possible treat waste food like ingredients – for example, use chopped broccoli stalks in stir fry or try mashed potatoes with their skin on!

Make compost for use in your, or someone else's, garden. This not only prevents food rotting and producing methane in landfill, but it also means it will not create a further transport footprint. The next best thing is a council collection food scheme which mostly turns our scraps into energy or fertilizer.

Storage

Use the top shelf in your fridge for food that is close to its use by date, or that needs using up, so that you do not forget about it. Maybe even get into the habit of having a "flung together meal" once a week that uses up this food.

Eat frozen once a week, so that items don't get forgotten about or stick around for too long, as well as making space for more food to be frozen.

Bananas are our most wasted food product with 920,000 being thrown away every day in the UK. If they are getting too ripe, slice and freeze them to later use in smoothies and milkshakes or make them into banana bread!

The 4 R's of Christmas Della Fazey

If you think you are too small to make a difference.....you haven't spent the night with a mosquito
(African proverb).

Much has been written and talked about the global climate crisis and whilst we often feel a bit helpless when hearing of the enormity of the problem and hearing this or that politician saying what needs to be done globally by nations or multi-national corporations, we also have to consider our own behaviours which, like the mosquito, can have an impact far greater than our size would suggest.

The 4 R's of sustainable living (<https://www.trvst.world/sustainable-living/importance-of-4rs-refuse-reduce-reuse-recycle/>) might help us understand how, as a small and apparently insignificant individual, we can actively promote a lifestyle which will help to reduce the devastating effects of climate change. When better to ponder such things than now at Christmas – when we celebrate the coming of the Christ-Child, the realisation of hope and a God inspired change of direction for humanity.

So here they are.....the **4 R's of Christmas (or should that be ChRRRRistmas!!!)**

REFUSE

Most of our activity here will be about purchases we make and often about food though frequently alternatives are limited. Consider whether you can refuse to buy food which is packed in plastic, whether you can choose loose fruit and vegetables which you can put into recyclable bags or reusable bags such as the small net bags available for sale in many stores. **Refuse** to buy the cheapest meat and eggs – look for labels indicating high welfare standards, locally-sourced or at least British. Look for alternatives to buying plastic bottles of any description – not easy! **Refuse** to use anything other than 'bags for life' and never go shopping without them. **Refuse** to use cling film whenever possible – alternatives are available. Consider the clothing you buy – where has it come from? Is it made of sustainably produced materials (often difficult to determine)? Are people being damaged in its production? There will be many other ideas that people have – please share!

REDUCE

This is really important and probably a key commitment if we are to have an impact. Over time we have come to expect to own and have access to 'stuff'. It's described as an increase in the standard of living but do we need it all? Can we live without some of it? Can we repair it rather than throw it away? **Reducing** consumption – of food, of clothing, of water, of electricity/gas/petrol – will have an impact. Turn the tap off when you're brushing your teeth, switch-off a light when you're leaving a room, cook adequate proportions of food so there's no waste, don't buy that extra jumper unless you really need it, put tape around a brush handle rather than replacing it, reduce the number of car journeys you make (what else can you do while you're out there; can you do one shop rather than two?), **reduce** the amount of washing you do (can you wear those clothes one more time?) – all these seem minor acts but will, eventually, make a difference particularly if we can persuade others to do the same.

REUSE

We know that plastic is an amazing material which is used in many products. It's valuable but made from fossil fuels and damaging to the environment in so many ways when thrown away. Whenever we use plastic we should try to avoid it being a single use – a good example of this is the disposable face mask when a reusable one can be just as effective. What can we **reuse**? This is easy if it's a bottle as it can be refilled many times (if you can afford to buy and store 5l bottles of cleaning fluid, shampoo, washing up liquid then you can refill many times. Traidcraft has a good range.) . Try washing and **reusing** cling film and plastic bags which

have stored food – not difficult! Other materials can be repurposed too so that we can achieve the **Reduce** target of using less stuff. The centres of toilet rolls or newspapers can be used to make pots for growing seedlings for instance. So-called disposable items can often be used many times so think before you bin them. Ask yourself what you **reuse** on a daily basis and whether you can increase these items.

RECYCLE

We have all become used to recycling items and most people are very good at it. If we can't reuse something, can we **recycle** it (or consider refusing to buy it next time as it's not recyclable)? Tesco now has a collection point for soft plastics like crisp packets which are not taken in our household recycling so look out for these opportunities. Consider whether someone else could use an item you don't need. There are plenty of places where you can take unwanted goods for others to take away or buy – charity shops, recycling centres, the Freecycle organisation.

If we were all to try to adjust our lifestyle by using the 4 R's, together we would make a big difference. We need to value our world and recognise its fragility, be determined to do what we can live carefully to minimise the damage, consider how we can share rather than drain the resources for all, raise awareness of our collective responsibility. There's not much time so let's start changing things now.

The St. John's Eco Group would welcome any suggestions about activities that could be organised to support individuals in our community to achieve the 4R's.

Have a gRRRRreat ChRRRRistmas!!!

North Wales Recycle IT CIC

"We are a not-for-profit social enterprise (also termed a Community Interest Company) and the only treatment centre of this kind in North Wales, offering secure and professional recycling, re-use and disposal services for all IT equipment.

In our operation, **after secure removal of any data**, 20% of working equipment received is refurbished for reuse and donated to local charities, schools, social enterprises and community groups. We sell the remaining working machinery to fund our Community Interest Company, with significantly reduced costs, to groups in the community unable to afford the IT they need, such as low-income families, long-term unemployed and start-up businesses. Our company benefits from employing some highly skilled people with disabilities, who might themselves have struggled to find work.

We need **(in any condition)**

Laptop chargers, broken laptops that don't work, computer accessories, computer equipment, desktop computers, flat screen monitors, games console accessories, games consoles, keyboards, laptops, mobile phones, monitors, tablets."

How to donate: Contact Martyn Boyce (01248 353673 or martynboyce@btinternet.com) who will arrange collection on behalf of Bangor Rotary Club. Please also save used stamps and printer cartridges for the North Wales Society for the Blind. Thank you.

Shining the light of Jesus in Penmaenmawr

Over recent years Julian and I have been aware of the number of family groups out and about for Trick and Treat on 31st October. We kept saying we must really see what we can do as a church to respond to this and share the Love of Jesus but never got any further. This year however, we decided that it had to happen, after nearly two years of lockdown we have not had any community events at Church and this seemed to be something simple that we could do.



Our aim was to share the light of Jesus and to let people know that the church is there to welcome people. We originally planned to be outside in the garden but the weather had other ideas. In the end a few of us stood on the road encouraging people to go into the entrance for some sweets, treats and a chat. I think with hindsight this actually worked better than the original idea as people came over the door step.

As well as the mandatory sweets, we had balloons with 'Jesus light of the world' printed on, glow sticks that

shine in the darkness, stickers and some very short bible stories. We lit up the gate with the pumpkins we had carved crosses into, turned on all the lights in church and played some music so it looked like we were in business and ready for action.



We had no idea whether anyone would actually turn up or not. We had advertised by word of mouth and the local social media pages. We were so encouraged not just by

the passers by who were encouraged to venture into the building, but the number of families who

we have already got links with who came down to church to say hello and find out what was going on. A lot of the people who came were families with small children and they were simply out as a family having a bit of fun. We are now encouraged to try and do something similar at Christmas, perhaps with a simple craft to do, a goody bag and something with the Christmas story in for families to take away.

Heather Bonnebaigt



Christmas would not be the same without music, especially Christmas Carols telling us the story of the first Christmas. I asked a few folk which was their favourite carol and here are a few replies. I actually think its an impossible ask!! I like so many!! High on the list is **While Shepherd's Watched** to the Tune Cranbrook (Ilkley Moor Bah Tat), its best with a couple of hundred folk singing it in parts as well.



Heather Bonnebaigt

“ Of the Father’s Love begotten”

Situates the Incarnation of Christ in God’s Love throughout all time and space.

Ruth Levine

You asked for favourite Christmas songs to go on the circuit letter. So, I know I mentioned **'Like a candle flame'**, can I request also **'Mary did you know'** as a beautiful song too please. I used this in Pen with Joan playing the piano so you could all sing it some time ago!!! You all managed very well, and if you listen on Google you will know just why I think it is just right! The candle flame one we sang at our Christmas concert, 'Make way for Christmas' the one just before the world turned on its axis and stopped all worship loud singing, joining together physically for concerts, so that is also precious. I sang the echo with the men as they were not as many!! It was a good outreach, there were folks there who had no church background too, and they were very moved by the whole evening. **Jean Owen**

As to a Christmas carol I like, there is "**Cradled in a manger meanly laid the Son of Man his head.**" It's 197(ii) in "Singing the Faith". Tune: St Winifred, played on an organ and sung with full harmony by a choir or congregation. I only encountered this when I came to St John's. It seems to me to have the right mixture of presenting the Nativity as an event, and exploring its cosmic significance. **Colin Price**



**Hark the Herald Angels sing
Glory to the new-born King.**

“ I think it really gets to the heart of the good news of Christmas.

Julian Bonnebaigt

In the Bleak Midwinter,

“The perfect combination of words and music”

Robina Gretton.

“ What can I give Him poor as I am? Give my heart

“I well up every time but love it so much”

Barbara Tottle



We need you to help us to fill future editions of Circuit News. If you have any words of wisdom, jokes, pictures, stories you would like to share please send them to us.

Thanks to John and Rosemary Nunn for sharing more of their nativity collection to illustrate this edition of the Newsletter.



Heather Bonnebaigt

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And finally another Christmas Carol

Lorna Sykes asked for “Angels from the realms of glory “

She says the chorus “ Come and worship Christ the new born King” The everlasting invitation to come and the melody is beautiful and brings tears to her eyes every time.

As we approach Christmas may we all spend time worshipping our New Born King whether together or in our own homes.