

November 2020

CIRCUIT NEWS

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.

Its time to get ready!!!!

**GOD
IS WITH
US**

As we look forward to Advent and the Christmas season in what can only be described as extraordinary times, Rev Rosemary Nunn takes time out to reflect on how we can respond and use this time to share the goodnews of Jesus .

**MAE
DUW GYDA
ni**

It's more than a decade now since adverts appeared on London buses with the slogan *"There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and get on with your life."* The British Humanist Association said it would make people think, and Professor Richard Dawkins, one of its financial backers and author of *"The God Delusion"*, stated that *"thinking is anathema to religion."* He should perhaps visit my study when I'm wrestling with sermon-preparation! The adverts included links to secular, humanist and atheist organisations, offering *"a positive and liberating alternative to religion."*

Alarming? Some were surprised that the Methodist Church's Spirituality and Discipleship Officer at the time, Rev Jenny Ellis, said: *"We are grateful to Richard Dawkins for his continued interest in God and for encouraging people to think about these issues. This campaign will be a good thing if it gets people to engage with the deepest questions of life."* Meanwhile the Christian think-tank Theos went a step further and actually made a £50 donation to the campaign, saying: *"We think this campaign is a brilliant way to get people thinking about God."*



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I welcomed those positive rather than defensive responses. As Christians, we shouldn't shy away from opportunities to engage in discussions and demonstrate the folly of the popular misconception that Christianity is a mindless religion, only suited for those with very limited brainpower. Jesus himself urged his followers to love God "with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your *mind*," and we owe it to him to equip ourselves to gently but firmly explain just what it is that we believe and who it is that we believe in.

Silly as it may sound, I have found that the best way to do that is to have regular practice discussions with myself, taking both sides in the discussion! And as often as not I find myself saying (to my imaginary doubting friend!) "but the god you don't believe in is a god I don't believe in either. God's not like that at all." That was exactly how I wanted to respond to those adverts on the buses: the God I put my faith simply doesn't cause me to live in a perpetual state of worry or to put my life on hold as the slogan suggests. He's the God who offers "life in all its fullness" and who showed us in the life of Jesus that he delights in being with people and improving their lot in all sorts of ways, rather than being some sort of remote hectoring misery just waiting to catch us out doing something he disapproves of.

The time between now and Christmas is a brilliant time for us to gently put right all sorts of misunderstandings about Christianity as we publicly rejoice in the amazing love of God – a love so profound that he was prepared to make himself completely vulnerable by coming right amongst us in human form - "Emmanuel, God with us". The atheist slogan has it exactly right when it suggests we should stop worrying and get on with the rest of our lives. I find that it is precisely when I put my trust in the God who loves me (and because he has shared my human experience that I am able to do exactly as they suggest.



Time to get baking!!

Make sure the cake is cooked in time!



Christmas Eve

6pm Circuit Service on ZOOM

7pm Why not join other Christian's from across Wales and sing Silent Night on your door step?

Details next month





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Our Life as Foster Parents

Our “fostering” life began approx. 37 years ago in Rochdale. We had seen an advert in the local paper appealing for foster parents, and as our eldest daughter had gone off to college, we felt that the time was right to share our home and love with a young person who maybe we could help. We subsequently attended a meeting at a local children’s home to find out more. There were a number of other people at that event, couples and singles, and we were introduced to a 14 year old boy who was desperate for a new family. He had been on a programme called Brasstacks appealing for a new family but without success. On the way home, Mike my husband said I think that boy will be coming to live with us! And so he did, staying for 15 months until he went into the Army as a boy soldier.

At that time the assessment of potential foster parents was not as rigorous as it is now, nor was there the same level of training available. Much of what we did was by instinct helped by regular support from the boy’s social worker with whom we developed an excellent rapport. We faced many challenges which we always tried to deal with using humour, whenever appropriate, and good old communication. We had an 11 year old daughter and she provided an excellent “bridge” between ourselves and the young person – as she has done on untold occasions since! Having a virtual stranger move into the family home changes the dynamics of the family and a good deal of adapting is required on all sides.

Following our first foray into fostering, we had another two young men come to live with us, one having an horrendous start in life and with learning difficulties, and another Asian boy who we accommodated by making allowances for Halal cooking and culture, and trying to understand the breakdown of communication with his family. These three boys, now of course men are still an important part of our family and our daughter still refers to them as her brothers. They are all in touch with her, usually asking for her advice!!

Following the moving on of the boys, one into a relationship and one to University, we decided to move to Anglesey. We contacted Anglesey Social Services with a view to offering Respite care as we considered ourselves (almost) retired. This was 20 years ago. The assessment and training by this time was a much more “professional” affair involving a great deal of checking up on our background and lots of training including two residential weekends, where we had a condensed view of the very worst that we could be likely to experience. (We of course found that some of what we were told DID happen, but not all at the same time!! And support was always available. But the training could (and was) off-putting for some on the course, and people dropped out as they felt it wasn’t for them.

Following the training and acceptance as foster parents, we were registered for short to medium term (not Respite) and since we been on Anglesey we have given a home to many young people, mostly teenagers, some short term (days only) and some for 2/3 years



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The reasons young people come into care are varied. At the beginning it seemed to be breakdown in families, parents separating, single parent becoming unable to cope etc and the young person suffering from neglect. But in more recent years the children are often in much more danger – mental/emotional/sexual abuse, threatened suicide, severe neglect, people trafficking and asylum seekers. Problems they bring with them need patience, kindness and understanding, (which can be hard to maintain when feeling exhausted). We have homed Afghan, Asian and Eastern European young people and the most difficult part is when there is a language barrier, not to mention culture – such as a young woman who was brought to us, and initially wouldn't get out of the car as she was terrified by being surrounded by trees! Then was totally freaked out by our dog (a black border collie), Although we had been told she was a Christian, she was also indoctrinated into Voodoo and black dogs in that culture are believed to steal the soul. It was decided that she would not settle with us so was returned to a previous placement.

A problem experienced by ourselves as well as many other foster carers we are in touch with, is taking a young person on holiday, particularly abroad. A number of young people who have lived with us have never been on holiday, not to mention going to another country. The whole experience is so outside their comfort zone that they are unable to cope, and behaviour deteriorates. That doesn't deter us from taking holidays in this country whenever possible, and occasionally a young person will embrace the new experiences a holiday brings.

In order to cope with all the problems experienced, we are expected to undertake regular training, some routine which have to be updated, and other more specific training. A recent online course I undertook was about the effect of trauma on brain development. Findings from the research done is terrifying – being far more likely to experience diabetes, heart disease, obesity, cancer etc etc. The more I do the more I realise that I know very little!! We always knew that trauma in early years affected for instance education development but had been unaware of long-term health implications

We also have the support of Social Services, and have been so fortunate to have met and made friends with a number of social workers over the years. They have been a huge help to us offering advice and helping to keep some perspective when we've been faced with particularly difficult situations.

Despite problems along the way, we are so glad that almost by accident we became involved in the "fostering life" and have been able to have so many positive experiences. We have met some lovely young people, we hope we've been able to help them when they most needed it, and a number of whom are still in touch and are considered part of our family.

Mike and Mary Bulmer October 2020



Notre Dame De Paris

I The External Aspect

Timeless in setting,
 the gem in the Isle,
 so sublimely subletting
 its seminal style
 to the vendors who trade
 on the camera-prone quay;
 in all splendours displayed
Notre Dame de Paris!

Dizzy buttresses fly,
 gruesome gargoyles project;
 crazy pinnacles vie
 for fantastic effect
 with the flèche at the crossing;
 combined, they supply
 sun-emboldened embossing
 on indigo sky.

II By Pont St Louis

Hunching back in the corner,
 cap boasting two coins,
 overcoat over-worn,
 adrift at the joints,
 unkempt and uncared-for,
 eyes grey and a-glaze,
 he has stood there and stared for
 an epoch of days.

Embarrassing meeting
 evaded: steps switched
 deftly leftwards, the fleeting
 eye-contact unhitched.
 No need to share dewy-
 eyed do-gooders' fate:
 those who work *Pont St Louis*
 in destitute state
 ought to work for the city
 – make shift at a job –
 and not trade on my pity
 and morally rob
 me of that which is mine.
 (And it surely is *wrong*)

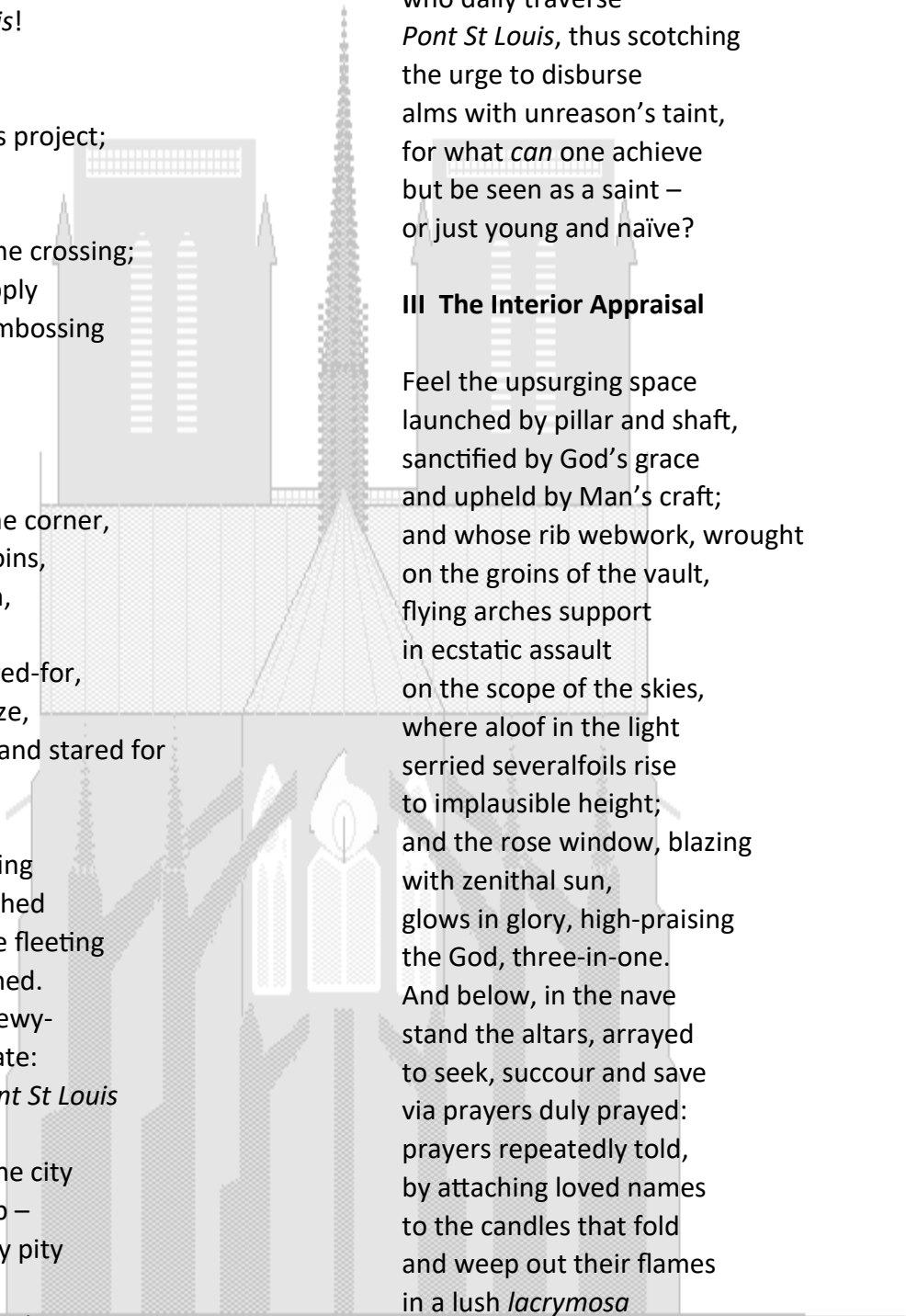
As we focus upon our own engagement with issues of social responsibility, Colin Price – a member at St. John’s, Bangor – has offered the use of his poem *Notre Dame de Paris*, which is a reflection on a visit he made more than 50 years ago. The section sub-titled *By Pont St Louis* sharpens our focus upon the fact that within the surroundings of that beautiful cathedral, poverty, deprivation, rejection and loneliness are to be found, if we are prepared to look.

thus to subsidise wine –
 if not women and song?)

Besides, *they* are watching,
 who daily traverse
Pont St Louis, thus scotching
 the urge to disburse
 alms with unreason’s taint,
 for what *can* one achieve
 but be seen as a saint –
 or just young and naïve?

III The Interior Appraisal

Feel the upsurging space
 launched by pillar and shaft,
 sanctified by God’s grace
 and upheld by Man’s craft;
 and whose rib webwork, wrought
 on the groins of the vault,
 flying arches support
 in ecstatic assault
 on the scope of the skies,
 where aloof in the light
 serried severalfoils rise
 to implausible height;
 and the rose window, blazing
 with zenithal sun,
 glows in glory, high-praising
 the God, three-in-one.
 And below, in the nave
 stand the altars, arrayed
 to seek, succour and save
 via prayers duly prayed:
 prayers repeatedly told,
 by attaching loved names
 to the candles that fold
 and weep out their flames
 in a lush *lacrymosa*
 of supplicant wax
 that brings close people closer –



but signally lacks
any will to divert an
odd moment to know
those unsought, and uncertain
to ever be so.

We subjoin solipsistic
soliloquies' sigh,
and shut out that statistic
enlisted to die:
while the ductile church diction
and candles compel
us to cosy conviction
that all shall be well
in republics of sharing
that humans create,
where the erstwhile despairing
may rest on the State.

But such comforts convey
nothing hidden before,
and they hasten the way
to the south transept door
and the sister who stands
there soliciting francs
with the plate in her hands
and a soft-spoken thanks.

(*Merci*: and who heeds
what the purpose it serves? –
whether church's good deeds,
or financial reserves.
These oblations collate
our collective accord
with ourselves and our state
of salvation restored.)

IV *Pont St Louis* Revisited

No need to review
esoteric debates
where, beside *Pont St Louis*,
He still stands and waits.
Though the "*Merci*" is gruff,
a soft sister's voice still
would insist those who suffer
as grist to the mill

of a city, renowned
for the *chic* and the choice,
in due time *will* have found
more melodious voice.....

V Prayer to the Virgin

When the blaze of bright glazing
makes other lights dim,
and outweighs the sad gazing
of a brother to Him;
when our crucified *credos*
assert their first source
and we're torn by tornadoes
of writhing remorse;

where resolve to try harder
is vapid, and where
the warm rush of our ardour
extinguishes prayer
for unlovely and lonely
to whom we feel cold
in mind-markets where only
indulgence is sold;

when, by dint of denying
ourselves, we beget
self-importance: like flying
stone buttresses, set
to uphold ribs on groins
of the vault of the sky
with our cursory coins
and what blessings they buy;

and when "*Merci*" in tones
softly-spoken or gruff
in our conscience condones
never giving *enough*
of the alms that embarrass
by questioning goals:
Our Lady of Paris,
pray for our souls.



Thank you Anita



Anita the Youth and Community Co-ordinator at St Paul’s is moving onto a new job so I asked her to tell us about her new work adventure. This is what Anita says

“ Firstly, I thought I would share what I have enjoyed most about my role with St Paul’s. This is easy, I have loved thinking of creative ways to get all ages into the doors of St Paul’s then watching them thoroughly enjoy the time they have there. I truly believe that whatever the reason they come to us at some point in their lives they will remember that fun, caring place that provided yummy food! And return when they are ready to engage with faith.

I will be starting work with Livability in Conwy, which is a Christian charity that is committed to enabling people with disabilities to live the life they want to lead. They work to change what is unlivable, helping people to tackle the barriers they face and create a livable life. This is mainly done through an individuals life sum (I love this):

My life sum (4 things that make life livable)

Family + Walking + Nature + Peace = Anita’s livable Life.

I will be working as an enabler which means I will support individuals to work out their life sum and then help to make it happen. I am really excited about this job and can’t wait to get stuck in. I thank everyone in the circuit for their friendship, support and laughter. You are a relentless team and should be leading the Covid battle.



I then asked Royce and Joan Warner what they remember most about Anita’s time as the Youth and Community Co-ordinator and this is what they say

- In *Playtime* being on the mat with the children
 - having 'Pru & Dave the puppets in guest appearances
 - bible story and Prayer time
 - singing and actions
 - parents becoming more involved
 - playtime came very close to needing a 'waiting list'

In *Messy Church* Team meetings at Anita’s house worked well with a stamp of approval from Morrie the dog and his silent insistence on “give us a biscuit”

- Introductory activities at Messy Church including “Simon Says” involving most adults
- Picking up Rebecca’s introduction of a Science activity and developing it on an almost monthly basis
- Welcoming older children, giving them a footstep of transition into a Youth Group and the Youth group that doubled, trebled, quadrupled into an overall registered number of young people.
- Cooked suppers—over 2 years including adults to a notional total of 4999.



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Ethiopia Appeal:- Message from Royce Warner

[To all Jam Jar Appeal workers: I have this morning received the draft certificate from MRDF (Methodist Relief & Development Fund) **All We Can** that will be presented to all fundraisers who have reached £27.50 - the cost of saving a farm in Northern Ethiopia and aiming to rescue **60** of them!

Please pass on / deliver, your Jam Jar / cheque / cash, to your Church Treasurer for the 15th December. A process will then carry this through to **All We Can**, certificates produced and a 'big celebration service' with 'All We Can' staff produced for the end of January. Listen/watch for notices giving more details next month. It's going to be an impressive event!]

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.

Heather Bonnebaigt

Circuit Newsletter Editor

Circuit Administrator

☎ 07944 006196

✉ Heather.bangormeth@gmail.com

Rev John Hughes

Superintendent Minister

☎ 01248 352015

✉ john.hughes@methodist.org.uk

*"God has created me to do Him some definite service.
He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another.
I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next.
I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons.
He has not created me for naught.
I shall do good; I shall do His work.
I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it if I do but keep His commandments.
Therefore, I will trust Him, whatever I am, I can never be thrown away.
If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him, in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him.
If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him.
He does nothing in vain. He knows what He is about.
He may take away my friends. He may throw me among strangers.
He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me.
Still, He knows what He is about. AMEN."*

Rev Ken Sykes LLanfairfechan