



Penrallt Baptist Church

Newsletter for December 2012

Why, oh why, did I ever agree to this? she said to herself. *First class honours in Chemistry, PGCE from Oxford, five years teaching Science successfully at a lovely Comprehensive School and here I am pretending to know something about Religious Studies in front of a class of very smart kids who know more than I do.*

"Chris," the head had whined in that end-of-the-tether voice that everyone in the teaching profession knows only too well, "With Julie off sick we're desperate for someone to take over RS with year 9. . ."

Julie off with stress, in fact, and now Chris knew why.

"Just teach it out of the text book," the head had cooed. Despite her sporadic church-going, her gap year in India had, apparently, qualified her as an expert in religion as far as the head was concerned. And it had gone alright until now. The lesson on the Christmas Story.

"But do you believe it, Miss?" Jemma Burton was insisting. Ah, Jemma. Good looking, intelligent, and deeply religious. With a knowledge of the Bible to put an emergency RS teacher to shame.

"Well, I'm not sure, Jemma . . ." stuttered Chris, not wanting to be put on the spot. "Why do you think I should?" *Good answer* she said to herself.

Turn the question round, allow the pupil to own the lesson.

"Well . . .," and as the girl took a deep breath Chris decided that maybe it hadn't been such a good idea.

"The universe doesn't look like it was an accident. Wasn't it you who told us that some Professor complained it looked like someone's being monkeying around with the laws of nature, otherwise the universe wouldn't actually exist at all? So, like, if that's true, why does God do to all that Creation stuff? There has to be an end result doesn't there, actually. So here you are. All that stuff crossing the Red Sea, and things like that. It's, like, all for a purpose."

"Yes, I guess you could argue that," said Chris, "but how would we know what the purpose is? It's not as if God is very clear in explaining his purpose, is it? We could just be dancing in the dark as far as we know."

Bad description, she thought. *They're far too young to be listening to quotations from Bruce Springsteen.*

"Fancy a dance, Jemma?" shouted Jamie Farrell from the back. Chris shot him a look.

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"But we're not dancing in the dark," protested the girl. "that's the point. The light has actually come into the darkness. It's not like it's a secret or anything. Which is why they had to, like, run away to Egypt and hide for ten years. Suppose God was, you know, actually working up to this? The Son of God born for us. Spotlights on Bethlehem, that kind of thing."

"That's four yeses and you're through to the next round" from the back row. Another teacher's look, a bit more threatening this time.

"Yes, Jemma, it could make sense. But why should I believe it?" *Can't believe I said that; it makes it look like I care. Maybe I do care, A bit.*

"I guess someone'd believe it if they actually cared enough to want to know the truth," said Jemma. "It would mean that God's come looking for you. I think that's cool."

Time was when teaching was enough, thought Chris. That and a nice boyfriend who turned out to be a snake.

"Excuse me, Miss. Is this actually in the curriculum?" interjected Jamie again.

"If I say it's in, then it is." Snapped Chris. "These are big questions and worth discussing. You can't just slouch in your seat - yes, Jamie, sit up straight please. You can't just slouch in your seat and ignore them. So, Jemma's description of "God's come looking for us" is good. I've said before that it's one of the distinctive features of the Christian religion. So, actually (*ironic stress on that word*), Jamie, it is in the curriculum. And why don't we make that our homework? Five hundred words on "Why is Christmas important in the Christian Faith?"

Groans from the class who are all now glaring at Jamie.

Sometimes I hate myself. But know what? Thank you Jemma. I do care about God. I only hope he isn't too disappointed when he finds me.

"You can use the last ten minutes to discuss in your groups how to answer."

"Son of God, born for us" is Penrallt's theme this year. Join us in our special activities. I commend "The Bethlehem Experience" to you as an excellent start to the Christmas season. A time to be quiet and reflect. A time to find God and be found by Him.

We wish you all God's blessing over Christmas.

Peter

Students

We welcome all students to Penrallt. Please make sure you pick up a welcome pack from the porch. David McCormack is our student coordinator for this year and we encourage you to say "hi" to him and find out what is happening in our church over the coming months.

SERVICES IN DECEMBER

Dec 2

10.30am Geoff Birch ***Preparing for Christmas through Advent
(700 years or 4 weeks)*** *Isaiah 9:1-6*

2.15 pm Service at Bontnewydd

5 – 7pm Our evening service will be taken over by The Bethlehem Experience in the main chapel (see below). It will be open between 5 and 7pm.

Dec 9

10.30am ***God loves you more than you will ever know. 1 Peter 1:17-21***

6.00pm ***Heaven's Mystery***

Dec 16

10.30am Sunday School Christmas Celebration

6.00pm Upper Bangor Carols by Candlelight

Dec 23

10.30am ***He became poor . . .***
No Evening Service

Dec 25

10.30am Christmas Day service *There will be an offering for two local charities, GISDA and the Women's Refuge.*

Dec 30

10.30am Family Communion Service

6.00pm Testimony Service: Come prepared to share what God has done for you this year.

CHURCH LUNCH

We will host a church lunch on **Sunday December 2**. Please bring enough buffet style "finger food" for yourselves and one or two others.

Faith Café

After church on Sunday evening **9 December** as usual we will be hosting Faith Café for students, teenagers and other young adults. Starting around 7:15 pm it is an evening of chat, interviews, music and discussions. There is a short programme at around 7:40 after which you are free to leave or stay and chat.

DECEMBER 2ND: THE BETHLEHEM EXPERIENCE – ANY TIME BETWEEN 5 AND 7PM

We turn the chapel into Bethlehem. Wander around the different prayer stations at your own speed, ending up, of course in the stable. It is interactive and multimedia. Come in your own time. It takes at least 25 minutes to walk around, but about 40 minutes to do it full justice. It is probably the best opportunity we can offer you to think quietly about the impact of the Incarnation of Christ on your life. Don't miss it. (Coffee and a mince pie in the hall when you are finished). If you want to donate a box of mince pies, we will happily accept them.

DECEMBER 16TH SUNDAY SCHOOL SERVICE AT 10:30 AM

Our annual Christmas service with the help of the Sunday School team and children.

DECEMBER 16TH : COMMUNITY CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT AT 6PM

Once again we have invited the community groups from the Canolfan to share the evening with us. This makes for a different style of service so please do not expect the traditional format. We will have Bangor Community choir performing, as well as our own ensemble. It is a wonderful evening. Don't miss it.

SPECIAL DATES

Saturday 1	10.30am - 2.30pm	Women's Advent Retreat
Monday 3	7.30pm	Deacons' Meeting
Wednesday 5	10.30am	Men's prayer meeting followed by coffee in Options.
Friday 7	5.00pm	CYTUN Carol Singing by the Town Clock (see Noticeboard below)
Saturday 8	9.30am	Bible Unzipped course continues in Rhos-on-Sea (see notice below)
Monday 10	7.00pm	Bangor University Carol Service in the Cathedral
Wednesday 12	6.30pm	Ysgol Cae Top Carol Service in Penrallt
Thursday 13		Allen Ince's Music concert in Penrallt
December 19-24		Christmas Tree event in the Cathedral
Tuesday 1 January	1.00pm	New Year's Day Walk if there is interest in it.

NEWS OF PEOPLE

Elaine Green's Graduation Ceremony will be on December 10th in Manchester when she receives her Theology Degree. Congratulations, Elaine!

Andrew Browne had his operation last month and is recovering. **Sarah Jackson** is back in harness after her operation. **Joyce** is still waiting for her surgery.

Our condolences to **Barbara Wright** on the death of her father last month.

Nancy Jones had a very bad turn and is in hospital at the time of writing.

Children's Birthdays in December

8th: Euan Young; **14th**: Lowri Brook and Alun Hughes; **19th**: Jordan Evans; **23rd**: Finley Lemon; **29th**: Anna Walker

WEEKDAYS

Please check with the contact people when there are meetings this month.

HG = Home Group

Day	Time	Details	Contacts
Tue	8.00pm	HG, Nilgiri	Joan Beer (353874)
Tue	7.30pm	HG, Tyddyn Isaf, Menai Bridge	Magnus Forrester-Barker (717570)
Wed	10.30am	Men's Prayer Meeting	Peter Cousins (353878)
Wed	2.00pm	Carers' Home Group	Carol Morris (208407)
Wed	7.30pm	HG, The Nomads	Jess & Seamus Adams (421185) Susan Cousins (353878)
Wed	7.30pm	HG, Bethesda	Jon & Deb Stammers (602868)
Wed	7.30pm	HG, Penchwintan Road	David McCormack (07725 028074)
Wed	8.00pm	HG, Grŵp Cymraeg	Owen & Nia Lloyd Evans (352634)
Thu	10.30am	Post-Alpha Bible Study	Sue & Lawrence Moss (713793)
Thu	7.30pm	HG, Llanfairpwll	Sue & Lawrence Moss (713793)
Thu	7.45pm	HG, Talwrn	Gill & James Goodman (751074)
Fri	10.30am - noon	Cheeky Monkeys	Joan Rymer (713003)
Fri	10.30 – 12.30pm	HG, 6 Maes y Dref	Anne Collis (353173) anne@collis66.freemove.co.uk
Sat	8.30am	Prayer Meeting	

NOTICEBOARD

- ***The Bethlehem Experience – Help needed*** ***Sunday 2 December***
On Sunday 2 December we will be reassembling *The Bethlehem Experience* in the afternoon and dismantling it in the evening. This involves a lot of light manual tasks, for which we need a team of people to help. If you are free to help would you tell Andrew March, Peter Cousins or David McCormack please?
- ***Men's Prayer Meeting*** ***Wednesday 5 December 10.30am***
The men will meet for prayer as usual, followed by coffee in Options.
- ***Cytun Carol Singing at the Town Clock*** ***Friday 7 December 5.00pm***
Come and sing, come and meet the donkey! There will also be a Continental Market at the same time – so an opportunity to do some Christmas shopping as well.

- **AGLOW** **Friday 7 December** **6.30pm**
 Monica Morris is speaking to the women's AGLOW meeting about her recent experiences in India. Cemaes Bay Village Hall on Friday 7th December at 6:30pm. A £5 donation towards the food etc would be appreciated.

- **Bible Unzipped.** Third Session: **Saturday 8 December 9:30am - 1pm**
Bible Unzipped is run by a group of local ministers who have a passion for Biblical Theology. Its aim is to unpack Scripture with those interested in learning more than can be offered in a Sunday sermon. It also equips those leading in the church with some tools for studying and teaching from the Bible. The histories of the texts themselves, the different ways they have been interpreted and their use for contemporary life and personal devotion will be considered.
Bible Unzipped meets monthly on a Saturday morning at Rhos-on-Sea URC from 9:30am to 1pm. Each morning includes three one-hour sessions which develop a theme through the term. The themes for this term are: 'Genesis: a story that will make you believe in God', 'The audience and purpose of Paul's letter to the Romans' and 'Meeting God in Scripture'. No previous experience of Bible Study is required. The course is free. The first session was very successful and you may join the course at any time. Ask Peter for more details.

- **Walking Group** There will be no walking group this month.

- **Greetings from Uganda!**
 Andrew Packwood was recently in Uganda and attended two services at the Kampala Baptist Church (<http://kbcuganda.org/>). The church has four pastors, and Andrew spoke with Pastor Francis Mayinja, who is in charge of Youth, Children and Discipleship. Francis sends greetings to Penrallt on behalf of the church.

- **Bangor Community Church Christmas Lunch**
 Every year it is our privilege to help Bangor Community Church provide Christmas Day lunch for about 50 guests who would otherwise be on their own on that day. Please give your donations of money to Colin and Christine King, 11 Deiniol Road, Bangor. 01248 352457.

- **Church Meeting** **Monday 7 January** **7.30pm**
 The next meeting for Church Members will be on Monday 7th January at 7:30pm. As we will approve the budget at this meeting, it is absolutely essential that we are quorate. Please mark it in your diary now and make every effort to attend.

- **Penrallt on Facebook**
 100 people are signed up to Penrallt's Facebook site. Join us.

- **Homeless in Bangor**
 Please do not give money directly to the homeless in Upper Bangor. We have found in the past that it has encouraged aggressive begging on the church premises by people who have a history of violence. You will find brown envelopes in the porch to put your gift in. This will buy vouchers which are distributed by the Cathedral to the homeless.

➤ ***The Prayer Room...***

...is open before and after the service for quiet prayer. Penrallt is a place of prayer, so make use of this sacred space.

➤ ***Pray for Penrallt Every Day***

Sign up to receive our prayer diary by e-mail every Monday morning by sending your request to: office@penrallt.org.

If you have some subject for prayer, either send it in by e-mail, or fill in one of the pink cards, which are available in the porch, and place it in the visitors' cards box or give it to Peter or Magnus.

➤ ***Pastoral Help***

If you have pastoral concerns please contact Peter or one of the other members of the Pastoral Care team:

Geoff Birch 01286 870944

Pat Borlace 713146,

Judy Stammers 364394

Geoff Moore 410582

Susan Cousins 353878

Deadline for next month's newsletter Sunday 16 December

Please send information to Gwyneth (gwyneth@brindley-wales.com or 352682)

FOCUS ON...

The Hembury Family

Chris and Anna Hembury work for the YFC (Youth For Christ) and CMS (Church Mission Society) in Hull.

They live with their two children in the area in which they work.

Extract from their Link Letter 13:

wholehearted courage

We heard an interesting thing the other day that rang true and got us thinking: the original definition 'courage' (from the Latin "cor") is to tell the story of who you are with your whole heart. Living out our faith with integrity in a place where "the name of Jesus is rarely heard" (except as an expletive) to use an old CMS strap-line, often seems like a terribly brave thing to do from the outside, but it's really not that scary or big a deal. Making yourself vulnerable enough to really share all of who you are, and not hide the messed up, not-really-holding-this-together and painfully dysfunctional bits of who we are, well that stuff is really where courage is at and something we are reluctantly learning to do. Our teachers are those whom we have been more used to seeing as the ones who have much to learn, people who we've come to know and love in Hull



who are courageous enough to show us their true selves without that middle-class front of respectability. And of course we are also learning that that is precisely what living out our faith with integrity has to involve.

Three young people from our area, who have grown up through the clubs and summer camps, have decided to take a step of courage, telling the story of who they are in Christ, by getting baptised this coming weekend. We have been so encouraged to see God working in their lives and humbled to see how they have been prepared to be wholehearted about their faith in a culture and context where choosing to give your life to Jesus is often a lonely road.

en-couragement

We are experiencing a strange new phenomenon! In a place that has always struggled to attract or maintain a Christian presence, being starved of the much-needed resource of 'workers for the harvest', God seems to be bringing people who feel called to be help partners and add to the mission work in this part of Hull in different ways. So in the past three or so months we have been blessed with people bringing skills in Godly Play, counselling and support for streetworkers, pastoral and artistic gifts, all feeling some kind of pull or commitment to the community in this neighbourhood. We are literally en-couraged: strengthened in heart and emboldened in spirit.

courage of our convictions

Kavita (10 yrs) and Elijah (12 yrs) both continue to thrive, despite the prevailing wisdom that insists this is no place to bring up children! Of course we are bracing ourselves for the joys of parenting teenagers but all the signs so far seem to be that they will be more than okay.

pray

Please pray for the young people getting baptised this month and for us as we try to support and disciple them in the absence of a church or youth group to which they might belong.

Boulevard Baptist Church, where we run the Breakfast Club and which is the base for much of our work, has made the painful decision to close in a year and possibly sooner. Please pray as we meet with the church and the Yorkshire Baptist Association about what implications that has for our work and the vision for future mission here. It is hard to fathom what God's direction is when there is so much growth and life and possibility and so many coming to partner the work on the one hand and the imminent closure of the premises for all that on the other. Please pray for courage, that we might speak and act with wholehearted integrity, for wisdom and for grace under fire.

Thank God for all those who have come to partner with us, bringing their time and talents freely. Pray that they will be encouraged as they get to know people and build relationships with children, young people and adults in the community.

Thank you so much for your prayerful support. We thank God for you.
Merry Christmas,
Chris, Anna, Elijah & Kavita