a parish with a desire for church growth, mission and evangelism

It's official - Priest-in-Charge, Reverend Hywel Griffiths

Clyne Chapel
Mayals Road
Blackpill, SA3 5BT

Holy Cross Church
Fairwood Road
West Cross, SA3 5JP

and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men

www.parishofllwynderw.org

December 2020/January 2021

50 pence
THE PARISH OF LLWYNDERW
Holy Cross Church & Clyne Chapel, Swansea,
in the Mumbles Ministry Area

CLERGY
The Reverend Hywel D Griffiths
(Priest-in-Charge)
23, Mayals Avenue, Blackpill, Swansea, SA3 5DE
Telephone: 01792 403957              Email: rev.hywel@outlook.com

The Venerable Jonathan B Davies B.Th
(Archdeacon of Gower)
The Vicarage, Fairwood Road, West Cross, Swansea, SA3 5JP
Telephone & Fax: 01792 512747                 Email: ven.jbd@sky.com

The Reverend Biddy M S Wigley
(Assistant Curate)
5, Whitegates, Mayals, Swansea, SA3 5HW
Telephone: 01792 405404                Email: llwynderweditor@gmail.com

SERVICES IN THE PARISH

Sunday
8.00am Holy Eucharist Clyne Chapel
9.30am Sung Eucharist Holy Cross
11.00am Sung Eucharist Clyne Chapel

Wednesday
10.30am Holy Eucharist Clyne Chapel

Thursday
10.00am Holy Eucharist St Faith's Chapel

Please notify our pastoral care co-ordinator, Reverend Hywel Griffiths, of the names of those who are sick.

The Chapel of St Faith is open throughout the day for Foodbank drop-offs only.

Holy Baptism and Marriage arrangements may be made with The Reverend Hywel Griffiths

The Blessed Sacrament is reserved for Communion of the sick or infirm at any time.

The Holy Oils are available for the Sacrament of anointing.

WEEKLY PARISH HALL BOOKINGS

Fridays 9.30am - 12noon Community Art Class
Sundays 2.00pm - 4.30pm Ariosa Singers & Mumbles Voices
Rehearse with Les & Penny Ryan
READER
Dr Felicity Padley  32 Fernhill Close, Blackpill  Tel: 402437
  E: felicity.m.padley@gmail.com

LAY WORSHIP TEAM
Felicity Barrow, Mair Kiley, Felicity Padley, Esther Searle

PAROCHIAL OFFICERS

Parish Wardens
  Vicar’s Warden  Mrs Lesley Morris  Tel: 514769
  65 Gwerneinon Road, Sketty, SA2 8EW
  People’s Warden  Miss Kate Richard  Tel: 642297
  6 Ffynone Close, Uplands, SA1 6DA

PCC Secretary
  Dr Felicity Padley  Tel: 402437
  32 Fernhill Close, Blackpill, SA3 5BX

PCC Treasurer
  Mr Bob Wigley  Tel: 405404
  5 Whitegates, Mayals, SA3 5HW

Parish Organist
  Mr Leslie Ryan, BA (hons mus), LCCMD, AWCCM, CertEd (Wales)  Tel: 406062
  43 Mayals Avenue, Blackpill, SA3 5DB

THE LLWYNDERW PARISH HALL
  can be hired for meetings, birthday parties and other special occasions
  Contact: The Reverend Hywel Griffiths
  Telephone: 403957

PARISH ACTIVITIES

Messy Church, as advised, Holy Cross Church, Mondays at 3.15pm
Eden Bus, as advised, Holy Cross Church, Sundays at 4.00pm

Parish Prayer Group, every Tuesday
Details on weekly sheet. Contact Lyn Jones: 402080

Film Club. Contact Dave & Joyce Owen: 401512

Mothers’ Union, Branch Leaders:
  Hazel Somers: 401705 & Elaine Griffiths: 208269

Get Crafty Group
IN THIS ISSUE · · · · · ·

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Contributions for the FEBRUARY 2021 issue
to be received no later than
Thursday 21st January 2021

for publication on Sunday 31st January 2021

Rev’d Biddy Wigley
5 Whitegates, Mayals, Swansea, SA3 5HW

Email: llwynderweditor@gmail.com
A vicar was putting up a banner across the front of his church. In individual letters it spelt out GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST. Overnight, one of the letters fell down, so it read GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGH ST. The vicar was going to replace the missing letter, until he realised that the banner spelt out a message that needed to be heard.

How quickly this year has passed, December already and the season of Advent is upon us, during which we prepare to welcome and celebrate the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ at Christmas. But what will Christmas look like this year with all the restrictions that we are living under because of the coronavirus? What will we be able to do, and what will we not be able to do, who knows? We wait patiently to find out. The one thing we can all do is rejoice that God so loved the world and us that he give his one and only Son.

We all long for a brighter, safer future for ourselves, our families and the world, but there seems to be so much uncertainty and insecurity at the moment. Is this something new? Or has it always been like that? The world has been through troubling times before, but has come out the other side, but with this coronavirus and the restrictions the world is living under; life at the moment is not easy and seems very fragile.

At the time of Jesus’ birth, that first Christmas, life was not easy then and was very fragile too. The Jews were under the thumb, they were surrounded by soldiers and under the cosh of the mighty power of the Romans, and lived with many restrictions, of what they could and could not do. Everyday life was a massive struggle for ordinary people and the prospects seemed very bleak.

Into that uncertainty Jesus was born into the world, a world full
of restrictions, quietly and almost unnoticed, except for a few shepherds and some exotic travellers. Almost everyone else missed the event and his arrival, the arrival of God’s Son, the Saviour of the world.

The world is full of powerful men, Donald Trump was said to be “the most powerful man on earth” but he has lost in the recent American election. But in contrast, Jesus’ power is still active in the world today, it is not power over others, but a power to love and help others in a world which so often cries out in pain.

When the Angels sang, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours.” they meant that Jesus was bringing new life to a struggling world; new hope to those whose lives were full of grief; and a peace which can sustain and empower us all to work for a better future with his help and his presence.

Jesus came to give life to the world and to be a light in our lives. “All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” During this Advent season and at Christmas and in the year to come, when things seem so dark let the light of Christ shine in our lives, and that light will burn bright for all to see.

Both Sian and I would like to wish you and your family a happy and blessed Christmas and a peaceful and healthy New Year.

God bless, with much love, your friend in Christ, Hywel.
Congratulations to Bill Bassett, who celebrated his 90th birthday recently.

Congratulations to Jean Howells who also celebrated her 90th birthday in November.

And congratulations to Bob & Jean Howells who will celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary on Boxing Day.Shortly afterwards Bob will celebrate his 92nd birthday.

Lwynderw celebrates with you Bill, Jean and Bob and sends love and best wishes.
Church in Wales bishops are inviting people to join them in a prayer for the nation every day in Advent. They are inviting people of all faiths and traditions to pray with them every evening at 6pm from Advent Sunday, on November 29, to Christmas Day.

Their prayer asks for God’s healing and blessing on Wales during times of darkness, such as the pandemic. In a joint letter to the nation, the six diocesan bishops say, “Christians believe that God’s light (the light of truth, the light of justice, the light of love) shines in the world and, no matter how dark things become, whether because of COVID or other troubles and difficulties, yet there is always hope in God’s goodness and love.”

Acknowledging that not everyone in Wales shares this belief and respecting their convictions, the bishops invite people to adapt their prayer or simply join in the spirit of it. They say, “We are sure that the healing, the strength, the compassion and the courage for which we will be praying are important to all people, whether of faith or not. Whatever our beliefs, we can all wish good cheer and well-being to everyone in Wales in this season.”

Heavenly Father, in the midst of a troubled world, you are light and life.

Send us your healing for those who are ill,
your strength for those who are suffering,
your compassion for those who grieve, and
your courage for those who work for the healing and service of others.

Bless our nation of Wales with the life-giving spirit of your love,
and grant us your mercy,
[revealed in the person of Christ your Son]. Amen.
+In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Christ, come into our world of darkness. Light up our lives with your coming. Fulfil all our longings with the joy of your birth. Strengthen our resolve to work for change in your world and to share the hope of your birth this season brings. Amen.

O come to my heart, Lord Jesus,
There is room in my heart for Thee.

Blessed be the Lord the God of Israel, who has come to his people and set them free. He has raised up for us a mighty Saviour, born of the house of his servant David. Through his holy prophets God promised of old to save us from our enemies, from the hands of all that hate us. To show mercy to our ancestors, and to remember his holy covenant. This was the oath God swore to our father Abraham: to set us free from the hands of our enemies. Free to worship without fear; holy and righteous in his sight all the days of our life. And you, child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way; To give the people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of all their sins.
In the tender compassion of our God  
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,  
To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,  
And to guide our feet into the way of peace.  

(The Song of Zachariah)

When the Lord comes, he will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness, and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Therefore in the light of Christ let us confess our sins.

(You may like to pause and call to mind those ways in which you have failed to respond to God’s love and to be a true disciple of Jesus asking for his forgiveness).

May God who has revealed his love for me in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ forgive me and cast away the darkness within me, that strengthened by the power of His Holy Spirit, I may serve him, delight in him and worship him with all my heart now and always. Amen.

Our Father.......

The Collects and Gospel Readings.
(Note: It is suggested that the Collect for Advent Sunday be used before the Gospel on each of the Sundays in Advent)

**ADVENT SUNDAY (29th November)**
Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious Majesty, to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.

The Gospel: St Mark 13: 24-37
ADVENT 2: St Mark 1: 1-8

ADVENT 3: St John 1: 6-8, 19-28

ADVENT 4: St Luke 1: 26-38

CHRISTMAS DAY:
Almighty God, who by the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ, dispelled the darkness of the world and gave light to all peoples, protect us when the darkness descends, and keep us ever in your light, and continue to enlighten our lives by your great glory. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.


Our God, heaven cannot hold him
Nor earth sustain;
Heaven and earth shall flee away
When he comes to reign:
In the bleak midwinter
A stable place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty
Jesus Christ.

What can I bring him
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man
I would play my part;
Yet what can I give him -
Give my heart.
ST JOHN’S DAY (27TH)
Merciful Lord, we beseech you to cast the bright beams of your light upon your Church, that, enlightened by the doctrine of your blessed apostle and evangelist John, we may so walk in the light of your truth, that at length we may attain to the light of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Gospel: St John 21: 19-25

CHRISTMAS 2 (3rd January)
Eternal Lord God, we give you thanks for bringing us through the changes of time to the beginning of another year. Forgive us the wrong we have done in the year that is past, and help us to spend the rest of our days to your honour and glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Gospel: St John 1: 1-18

Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way, sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided, Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

Lord, for ourselves; in living power remake us, self on the cross and Christ upon the throne; past put behind us, for the future take us, Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

THE EPIPHANY (10th)
Creator of the heavens, who led the Wise Men by a star to worship the Christ-child: guide and sustain us that we may find our journey’s end in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

The Gospel: St Matthew 2: 1-12
EPIPHANY 2 (17th)
Remember, Lord, what you have wrought in us, and not what we
deserve; and as you have called us to your service, make us worthy of our
calling; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Gospel: St John 1: 43-51

EPIPHANY 3 (24th)
Almighty God, your Son revealed in signs and miracles the wonder of
your saving presence:
renew your people with your heavenly grace, and in all our weakness
sustain us by your mighty power; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who
lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit one God world without
end. Amen.

The Gospel: St John 2: 1-11

Now you may like to bring before the Lord all those people and situations for
which you want to pray – the world, praying for peace where there is conflict and
war; the Church here and everywhere. It’s leaders, especially John our
Archbishop, Jonathan, Hywel, Biddy and Sarah. Your loved ones. Those who are
separated from each other this Christmas because of the coronavirus. The sick at
home or in hospital and your departed loved ones and friends.

And we join in this act of spiritual communion:
Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ
for all the benefits you have given me,
for all the pains and insults you have borne for me.
Since I cannot now receive you in Holy Communion
I ask you to enter spiritually into my heart.
O most merciful Redeemer,
Friend and Brother,
May I know you more clearly,
love you more dearly and
follow you more nearly,
day by day. Amen.
Father, you have revealed your love
by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ into our world.
Help us to welcome him with joy,
and to make room for him in our lives and homes,
that we may abide in him and he in us;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives
and reigns with you, O Father, and the Holy Spirit,
world without end. Amen.

We have seen his glory! Alleluia! Alleluia!
Thanks be to God! Alleluia! Alleluia!

The glory of the Lord shine upon us, and scatter the darkness from before
our path, that we may ever walk in his light; and the grace of our Lord
Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be
with us all evermore. Amen.

FROM THE PARISH REGISTERS

At Rest
John Rendel Thomas aged 80 years
John Brynmor Haydn Davies aged 82 years
Mothers’ Union’s first VIRTUAL GATHERING on 20th October proved to be a wonderful collection of updates & inspiring stories.

After a Reflection by the Central Chaplain, Worldwide President Sheran Harper gave a key note talk & the Annual Review & Accounts were presented with CEO & financial updates. Snapshots of MU projects around the world were followed by contributions from staff & members in the UK & Ireland.

For instance MU members, by request, have so far knitted & sewn 41 pairs of livers & 31 pairs of kidneys for a play therapist in Leeds Children’s Hospital who assists a child about to have an organ transplant to build a teddy bear. The child operates on the bear to replace a brown poorly organ with a red one to show it is now healthy and takes the bear home.

MU’s Urgent Appeal to plug a £1million shortfall in income due to the pandemic raised over £835,000 which gave the gift of time for the MU board & staff to RESTRUCTURE. Staff numbers have been reduced by a third & spending by over 30%. Just 27 staff remain to support MU worldwide with travel minimised to target increasing the level of free central reserves from one to three months to help build future resilience. Publications will be reduced, with the loss of the Families First magazine, but delivered direct to each member’s home & included in the subscription fee.

PROGRAMME work will be focused, funded & aligned to the three core aims members
Harper recounted how in Uganda, through broadcasts, MU members are raising the awareness of gender-based violence. This has increased the confidence of communities to report perpetrators resulting in MU collaborating with the police to rescue 25 adolescent girls who were trafficked. They are now receiving psycho-social support from the members there.

Enhanced, focused support will be provided to members in Britain & Ireland including continuing virtual Midday Prayers & other online worship events; a member-led meeting in February to share practical ways of nurturing current & encouraging new members in the new environment; an Annual Gathering in Belfast in September; other training & events in line with demand.


On 15 November in an inspirational sermon to the Anglican Communion Sheran

identified through MULOA (MU listens, observes & acts):
* Stopping gender injustice
* Stopping hunger & building self-reliance
* Stopping violence & building peace
* MU will campaign with others, including the Church, to counter domestic abuse, particularly in the wake of the pandemic.
OUR IMPACT IN 2019

1.1m people worldwide were helped to improve their lives in 2019

2,490 people from the UK and Ireland enjoyed one of our Away From It All breaks, to support families under stress

77,988 people are currently learning to read and write in Burundi

29,751 vulnerable people received a gift from us to meet an urgent need, such as clothing for a refugee or supplies for a new baby

Our work reached almost 8,000 prisoners and their families in Britain and Ireland in 2019, providing a listening ear, safe spaces and resources for families, and practical support

831 is the number of Saving groups we have in Rwanda with over £322,000 saved

80% of our 187 savings groups in Tanzania with 3,900 members already give to their community or plan to do so

11 the age of our youngest branch co-leader, ‘Mini MU’ in Liverpool

15 members of the Mothers’ Union branch based in a Durham prison

Annual Review 2019
Although England remains in ‘Lockdown’, our temporary Welsh ‘Firebreak’ has ended, and on the radio this morning, Mark Drakeford seemed to be quietly optimistic as to its effect on the ‘R’ number, although his message remains that we should continue to have regard for what we should do, rather than what we can do! It is good to be back in Church again, and let us all hope that this can continue for the foreseeable future.

At the same time, it appears that the nation is now turning its attention to Christmas, and what may or may not be possible in terms of meeting and getting together with friends and families. Whilst we, as Church Members, never lose sight of the true meaning of Christmas, nevertheless, we all understand that it is also traditionally a time for children, families and friends to celebrate Christ’s birth together, and we can but hope and pray that this will be possible this year. At the same time, we will, I am sure, continue to remember those who are for whatever reason, not so fortunate, and are likely to be alone or in need. Charities in particular have suffered financially this year, and I am sure you will be pleased to hear that the PCC has agreed that our annual Charitable Giving should be repeated this year, and we will be supporting the same Charities and in the same amounts as we did in 2019 - see page 20.

Now to more matters financial, for the last time in 2020! Your general response in terms of Giving during these difficult times has been excellent, and for which we are all most appreciative. Our Diocese, too, has been very supportive of Parishes, through its 2020 Covid-19 Financial Assistance Programme, but quite rightly, this support is predicated, inter alia on the extent to which Parishes have embraced ‘Digital Giving’ ie. by Standing Order or Bank Transfer, as the foundation of sustainable income. This, of course, is on the
premise that our costs, including Ministry Share, have to be paid whether or not our Churches are open for traditional worship, and the more we can match these with guaranteed regular income, the better.

We have done extremely well in Llwynderw, for which I thank you, and in this last note of 2020, may I personally appeal to those of you that have not yet signed a standing order to see whether you might be able to do so please. Remember, that unlike a Direct Debit, you always remain in control, and can cancel or change your payments at any time. Do please have a word with me if I can help in any way, either by allaying any concerns that you might have, or by making the arrangements for you.

With my personal thanks for all your support this year, and Biddy joins me in sending you all our very best wishes for a blessed and peaceful Christmas, and a happy and Covid free New Year.

Bob

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**THANK YOU**

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**PAM’S PROJECT!**

Dear Friends,

A big thank you to all who supported my face cover project for Faith in Families. A grand total of £350 will be sent.

If you would like to make people smile, I have made some Christmas face covers.

Thank you all again, Pam Buller

Tel: 01792 511791
Although the PCC agreed that we should replicate last year’s giving, St Stephen’s Night Shelter will not be run this year, so at the suggestion of Jonathan and Hywel we have added the £300 to the £500 we give to Christian Aid, and instead we will send £800 to The Church in Wales Centenary Appeal. All the monies raised are to be split equally between Christian Aid and Housing Justice Cymru, so each charity will effectively receive £400 from us! In Jonathan’s words, a win-win situation!

<table>
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<th>Charity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Embrace (Biblelands)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bishop’s Ministry Fund (for emergencies)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Faith in Families</td>
<td>£1000:00</td>
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<td>Bible Society/Open the Book</td>
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<td>Ty Olwen Trust</td>
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<td>Stepping Stones Childrens Centre</td>
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<td>Maggie’s - Singleton Hospital</td>
<td>£250:00</td>
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<td>Medecins sans Frontiers</td>
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<td>Kids Cancer Charity</td>
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<td>Matthew’s House</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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The GB Conference was intended to be held in September. We started well but soon abandoned the meeting as the IT was not up to dealing with us! We reconvened in November and everything went very smoothly, and the IT team are to be congratulated.

Archbishop John gave his "homily" and his message was very clear and simple. There is a fresh spirit growing from forced circumstances, he said. The Archbishop urges us to trust and try to press on to renew and rehabilitate when facing a new future, even if we have had reservations in the past. He emphasised that there is no going back to an imagined golden past.

The Archbishop illustrated from Numbers Chapters 11 and 24 that we should not complain and reminded us that we are in an ongoing struggle. He concluded by directing us to Romans 12. Let love be genuine. Be patient in tribulation. Keep faithful and carry on.

There are just two items I wish to refer to. One is the Church in Wakes Safeguarding Policy. We all agreed on the importance of promoting safer practice for children and adults at risk within our churches. We voted to adopt the Church in Wales Safeguarding Policy 2020 as the Safeguarding Policy for the whole Church in Wales.

The other item is one which will be coming up next year. It will be a discussion on a liturgy to bless same gender relationships.

The business was successfully completed, but as you all know there is a very different atmosphere in a Zoom meeting!

Linda
The Christmas Oratorio is a collection of six themed cantatas (extended anthems, often called ‘sermons in music’) written by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) in 1734. The separate cantatas were to be sung on the feast days of Christmas during the winter of 1734 and 1735 in St. Thomas and St. Nicholas churches in Leipzig, Germany where Bach was the music director.

His family comprised several accomplished composers. Today J.S.Bach is regarded as one of the greatest composers of all time. Johann Sebastian was born as the last child of a city musician in Eisenach, but he was tragically orphaned at 10. He moved in to live with his eldest brother Johann Christoph, another musician.

Bach was fascinated with the organ. When he was 20 he travelled mostly on foot 250 miles to the city of Lübeck to learn from the renowned organist Dietrich Buxtehude. Bach stayed for three months, making the most of the opportunities. Buxtehude’s playing and compositions were a revelation to the young man and had a profound influence on him. Bach did however, refuse the offer to wed Buxtehude’s daughter!

In 1723 Bach was appointed Kantor (music director) by the Leipzig city council to the Lutheran churches there, although he was not first choice for the position! Bach was twice married and fathered twenty children. They lived in a house provided by the council which had to install a much larger cooking range for Bach’s growing family.

Bach’s son Carl Phillip Emmanuel recalled in later years that his father had written enough sacred cantatas for the Leipzig churches to sing a different one
Bach had difficult relations with his employers. In 1717 he was imprisoned for a month by his employer the Duke of Weimar for rudely insisting on relinquishing his job as court composer. Bach used the time in prison to write some beautiful pieces for the organ based on hymns. In Leipzig Bach often accused the authorities of ‘penny-pinching’ and once accused a town councillor of sounding like an old bassoon! In 1736 Bach was given the titular appointment of Court Composer by Augustus, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, although he continued to work in Leipzig. Bach died of complications after eye surgery in 1750 at the age of 65.


Bach gives the narration of the Gospel to solo singers, other soloists sing personal reflections or meditations and he reserves the choir to give a more official commentary, often reflecting official, of course, Lutheran doctrines. The congregation joins in with Christmas hymns at various points.

Bach’s output was astonishing, comprising music for organ, harpsichord, solo violin, solo cello, concertos (the Brandenburg Concertos being his finest) and other orchestral music, and a huge amount of music for the church including almost 400 hymn tune arrangements.

After his death in 1750, his music dropped out of fashion in favour of the new styles by Haydn and Mozart. However the composer Mendelssohn in the 1840s discovered music manuscripts written by Bach and championed the revival of his music.
Who could have predicted the experience of 2020 a year ago? Who could have imagined the unfolding and continuing situation we and the whole world find ourselves in? The one thing I have learned is the good old guiding motto - Be Prepared!

An example of preparedness comes from South Korea who, following the SARS virus, learned the lessons and put plans in place so ensuring their readiness for a future pandemic. As a result they have avoided many of the problems that unprepared countries have experienced.

We enter Advent at a time of worldwide disruption, fear, loneliness, poverty, illness and loss. It seems that the end of the pandemic is still a somewhat distant hope and Christmas a rather different experience.

Because of the situation I have decided to return to an Advent book that I read a couple of years ago. Called *A Shaking Reality*, the author, Peter Price, draws on the experience of Fr Alfred Delp who was a prisoner of the Nazi regime. The book title is that of the meditation Delp wrote during his time of imprisonment.

Delp saw Advent as a time when we need to be ‘shaken and brought to our senses.’ He was living in fear and deprivation and looking at an uncertain future, but saw the need to refocus on that future; to pray to and work with God to restore justice, love and peace to the world.

Never has the world been in such need. I have just listened to a lecture by Rowan Williams who was teasing out the major points of Pope Francis’ Encyclical. He talked of the global crisis and the Church needing to be at the forefront of a new vision - a vision for a world where, despite being more interconnected than ever before, lacks any solidarity or real kinship as members of God’s family.
He talked about the dangers of embracing the myth that throws off the shackles of history, for it’s through history that we gain wisdom.

As we make our Advent journey of preparation towards what may be a very different Christmas, we must not forget that while our lives may have changed, the Gospel message of Good News for all has not and will never change.

Advent invites us to place ourselves under God’s restoring judgement, to turn ever more passionately to worship and prayer as we reclaim the truth of the angels’ message of *Peace on earth*, and to follow Jesus’ example of sensitivity and responsiveness to suffering and injustice.

It’s only when we remember our history that we are inspired by the Christ-Child who made God visible. And there’s the contrast: the virus remains invisible until it becomes visible in the suffering it inflicts. God was invisible until he became visible in Jesus’ healing and redeeming love offered to everyone who will receive it.

This Advent may we discover afresh the truth that as we live through the not insignificant challenges of Covid-19 we can be uplifted by the truth of God’s promise of redemption and release.

Whatever your experience of Christmas 2020 may you know peace and hope in God’s promise.

*With every blessing, Biddy*

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**Bob and Biddy** would like to wish all our friends in the parish a peaceful and blessed Christmas.

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