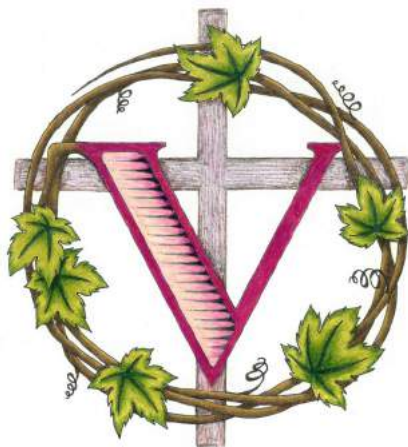


THE



Gwent Hills and Vales
Methodist Circuit

INE

Spring 2023

Journeying with Jesus

Rev Andrea Sims

This is a painting by the German artist Sieger Köder. It shows two people holding the central cross. The person on the left, in red, is Jesus and the person on the right dressed in green is Mary the mother of Jesus. The Son of God on the left and the mother of God on the right, with the cross at the centre.

If you look at the top of the picture you will notice that over Jesus' shoulder the sky is light – the light of Jesus by the power of the cross is pushing back the darkness portrayed on the right of the picture. Heaven and earth are joined at the cross.

Tension is building in the Biblical narrative as we begin to journey towards the cross, and Jesus speaks over and over again about being crucified. He brings up the awkward fact that life isn't going to remain nice and comfortable with healings and meals and celebrations. No, it's going to change and it will end in suffering.

Peter, when Jesus first mentions this, panics and tries to steer him away: "No, no you don't want to travel **that** journey – why would you choose death when you don't have to?" But Jesus is absolutely determined. Focused, he trusts God for the outcome. He will not be deterred.



*The Folly of God, Number 4:
Jesus Meets His Mother
by Sieger Köder*

Time after time Peter is portrayed as the voice who tries to put Jesus off; his is the voice of one who just doesn't get it, who doesn't understand the bigger picture. Peter and the rest of the disciples are uncomfortable – why does Jesus keep on saying these things? Why is he spoiling what we have by talking of death all the time?

Worse than that, when Jesus speaks of his forthcoming death, his disciples strike up an argument about which of them is the greatest and which one of them will take pride of place in the kingdom. When Jesus challenges them they are silent. Jesus says to them,

Continued on Page 3

HOUSEKEEPING

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...

CIRCUIT MEETING

Thursday, 16th March 2023, 7pm
Llanyrafon Methodist Church

EASTER BONNET COMPETITION, FOLLOWED BY EASTER PRAISE

Wednesday, 5th April 2023
Competition at 10am (with a guest judge!)
Service at 10.30am
Pontypool Indoor Market

GOOD FRIDAY

Friday, 7th April 2023, 11am
Beaufort Hill Methodist Church

SABBATICAL – REV ANDREA SIMS

1st May – 31st July 2023

CORONATION TEA PARTY

Saturday, 20th May 2023, 3pm
Trinity Methodist Church

FAREWELL SERVICE – REV DR STEPHEN WIGLEY

Saturday, 15th July 2023, 2.30pm
Cyncoed Methodist Church

FAREWELL SERVICE – REV DR GARETH EDWARDS

Sunday, 16th July 2023, 4pm
Nantyglo Methodist Church

WELCOME SERVICE – REV ANDREW CHARLESWORTH

Saturday, 2nd September 2023, 2.30pm
Cyncoed Methodist Church

WELCOME SERVICE – REV LORETTE HINSON

Sunday, 3rd September 2023, 4pm
Nantyglo Methodist Church

GWENT HILLS AND VALES CIRCUIT ZOOM SERVICE

Every Sunday evening, 6pm. Here's the link:

<https://zoom.us/j/94168420492?pwd=cjFTbzZUejhwTFBtVXdLl1FVkdIdz09>

Meeting ID: 941 6842 0492

Passcode: 831858

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07752 487 624

Deadline for items to be included in the Summer issue: 4th May 2023

WALES WATCH



Having successfully combined the Wales Synod with Synod Cymru last year, other Methodist changes are afoot in our beautiful country this summer. Rev Dr Stephen Wigley (*pictured left*), who has served so faithfully as Chair of the Wales Synod for many years, and then briefly as co-chair of the newly-formed joint synod, will be leaving us this summer. Hopefully, there will be more details in the summer edition, but for now we anticipate his departure with a mixture of sadness – we will miss him – and

excitement – for what comes next for him and us.

For us, “next” is Rev Andrew Charlesworth (*pictured right*), currently serving as one of the Superintendent Ministers of the Nottingham North East Circuit! Again, more details to follow and in the meantime, information about all Farewell and Welcome Services can be found on Page 2!



Journeying with Jesus

Continued from Page 1

“Whoever wants to be first must be last of all.”

Köder’s painting depicts a different kind of story, a different reaction. Here we have a stark image of humility, intimacy and servanthood. Mary is **with** Jesus. She accompanies him on his journey to the cross. Mary is hidden – her hand touching Jesus’ hand is the only clue we have that she is there at all. It is a picture of incredible intimacy. Their faces are hidden from view. We, the onlookers, don’t know what they are doing or saying to each other. It is secret, hidden, mysterious, intimate – just Mary and Jesus.

For Mary, her journey with Jesus is summed up by powerlessness – all through his life from his conception until (and especially) now, at the foot of the cross, we witness her lack of control over the situation – the cross (suffering) will happen and there is nothing that she can do about it.

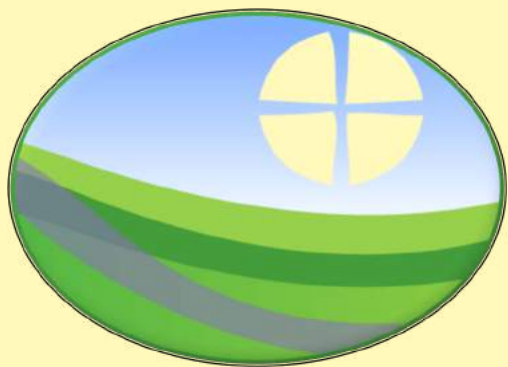
This is true for all of us; especially for those of us who follow Jesus, often on a difficult path of cobbles, steep hills, twists and turns; a journey where we will encounter jeers of misunderstanding. Suffering will happen in life, we cannot avoid it. The cross **will** happen. There it is in the centre – solid, firm, obstructing the way, **and yet** it also brings with it the deepest sense of intimacy with Jesus.

True service and humility are found in accepting that we have no control, no power; that our ego should be firmly put aside, accepting life as it happens and discovering Jesus in our midst. Serving God is very much about realising that sometimes, all we can do is simply **be** with people during the time of their cross.

If you look closely at Mary, you will see that there is a dark shadow on her shoulder – this is her veil. Here, Köder is illustrating that for Mary (and for us), life is a mystery, death is a mystery – we can’t see the full picture. The secrets of the Kingdom are hidden.

The outcome of the cross – the resurrection – is hidden to Mary. She teaches us that the important thing is to be with Jesus, to journey with Jesus, to stay with Jesus no matter what. Jesus is her centre – may he be ours too.

Rev Andrea Sims



BRANCH LINES

**News around the Gwent Hills and Vales
Methodist Circuit**

PLYGAIN

*Plygain is pronounced with the emphasis
on the first syllable:
“plig” like “pig” and “gine” like “fine”*

Abergavenny Methodist Church was the host venue in January for a service in the Welsh Plygain tradition. This formed part

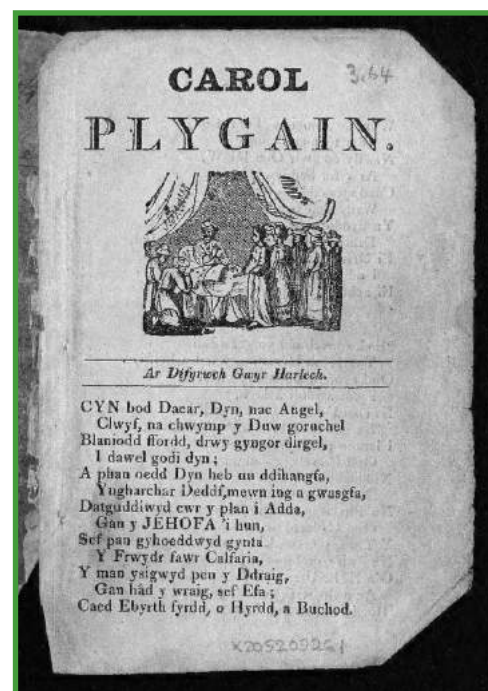
of a weekend of activities in the town, including the old Mari Lwyd (horse's head), marking the older (Julian calendar), mid-January New Year, also marked in predominantly Orthodox countries including Ukraine. Only a few places in West Wales had held strongly to marking this, but older traditions tend these days to be more widely celebrated. The plygain service is also held now more widely than in its strongholds of North Powys.

The plygain service probably arose during the Reformation to replace the Midnight Mass. It was traditionally held early in the morning by candlelight, but these days can be evening, and anytime within the Christmas period, up to the Hen Galan (*old New Year*). The word “plygain” is thought to derive from the Latin word “pullicantio” meaning “cock's crow”.

In a plygain, a short service of prayer and congregational singing is followed by throwing the floor open to small groups to come forward and sing a (traditionally unaccompanied) carol, the words of which were often handed down through families, especially in the rural areas. When all have had a chance to sing, groups can come up in the same order and sing another, until no more practised ones remain. These authentic carols have beautiful harmonies, and the words usually trace the history of salvation through the prophets, birth, life, death and resurrection of our Lord. In the end everyone who has sung joins in a carol together, which is the sign that the service has come to an end and refreshments will follow.

I have only once taken part in an early-Christmas-morning plygain, held in one of our smaller Welsh language Methodist churches in Lloc, near Holywell, in north-east Wales. As I was on sabbatical I felt that I could cope, this once, with getting to the church at 5am to be sure of a seat – people flock there from all over North Wales! That service lasted from 6am until nearly 8am. As often in our usual Christmas celebrations, Christian meaning is grafted on to earlier ones, e.g. the pagan origin of decorating houses (and churches!) with evergreens. It is into *this* world, not a neat and tidy one, that Jesus was born, and sacred and secular certainly mingle in modern plygain celebrations. It was good to see the Abergavenny church full, with some groups having travelled from as far away as Aberdare to sing with us.

If you would like information about Welsh language monthly services in Abergavenny, or would like to be put in touch with ‘Llandysgwyr’, an online service for those learning Welsh, do get in touch.

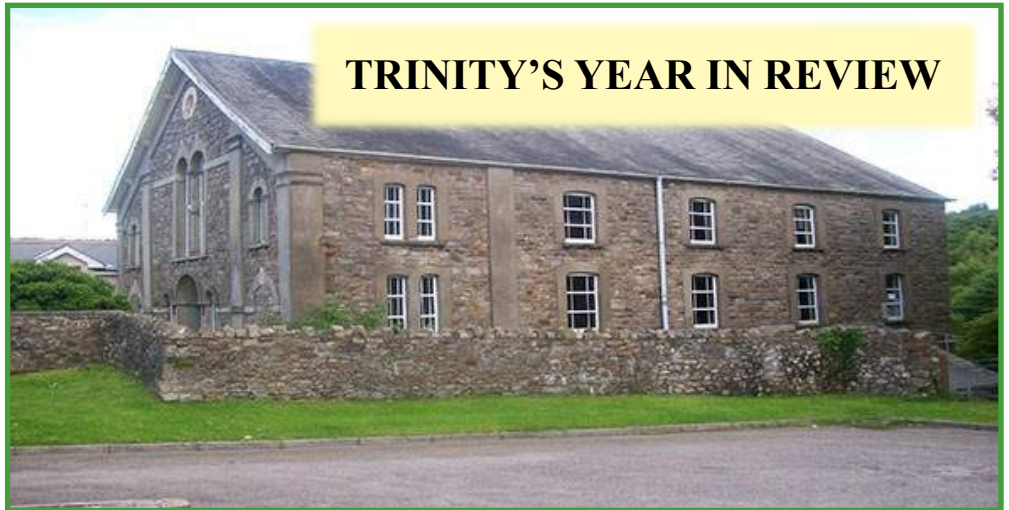


Plygain Carol on 'Difyrwrch gwŷr Harlech' (1825-1865) © Cardiff University Library

DEACON GWENLLIAN KNIGHTON

Editor: To contact Gwenllian, please do so through The Vine, details on Page 2

Trinity Chapel ended a very successful year with two well-attended Christmas celebrations: our Christingle service, where we raised over £200 for St David's Hospice, and our traditional Carol Service. Our grateful thanks to all who attended and helped to make both joyous occasions.



TRINITY'S YEAR IN REVIEW

We are very proud of our achievements through the year: we have introduced and grown our weekly coffee morning, welcoming regular visitors from areas as widespread as Newport all the way to Abergavenny, and are becoming well-known in our local community. We also welcomed our local MP, Nick Thomas-Symonds, and guests to a presentation on our hosting of African-American GIs during the Second World War.

Finally, we are also very pleased to announce that last year we managed to raise well over £1000 for charity.

This year we hope to continue our work both in the community and for charity and are planning an afternoon tea party on 20th May at 3pm to celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III. All are welcome.

GAYNOR JONES

GRAFTING FOR BEGINNERS

When Pontypool Methodist Church closed last year, a number of the members moved to join the congregation in Pontnewynydd. Consequently, that particular "branch" is experiencing something of a reseeded, renewal, re...not sure what to call it exactly, but change is in the air!

With a brand new leadership team, a new Tongan Church Representative to the Circuit Meeting and an augmented Church Council, there are plans afoot to formulate a new mission strategy to reach out to the local community.

Beginning in March, Pontnewynydd Methodist Church will be trialing alternate

morning and evening services! Every first and third Sunday there will be a service at 4pm, while every second and fourth Sunday, the service will be at 11am. Additionally, that fourth-Sunday-in-the-month service will be multi-lingual, featuring Welsh, Tongan and, obviously, English.



The congregation remains committed to growing together, working together and seeking new ways to "be church", while retaining some much-loved traditions.

Please pray for this fellowship as they move forward in faith, towards a new adventure in the Lord!

JOANNA SAUNDERS



CONNEXION CORNER

**“Do not allow yourself one thought
of separating from your brothers and sisters,
whether their opinions agree with yours or not.”**

John Wesley

News from the Methodist Connexion of the UK

EASTER OFFERING 2023

NO BORDERS TO GOD'S LOVE

***“The stranger who resides with you shall
be to you as a citizen among you; you
shall love the stranger as yourself.”***

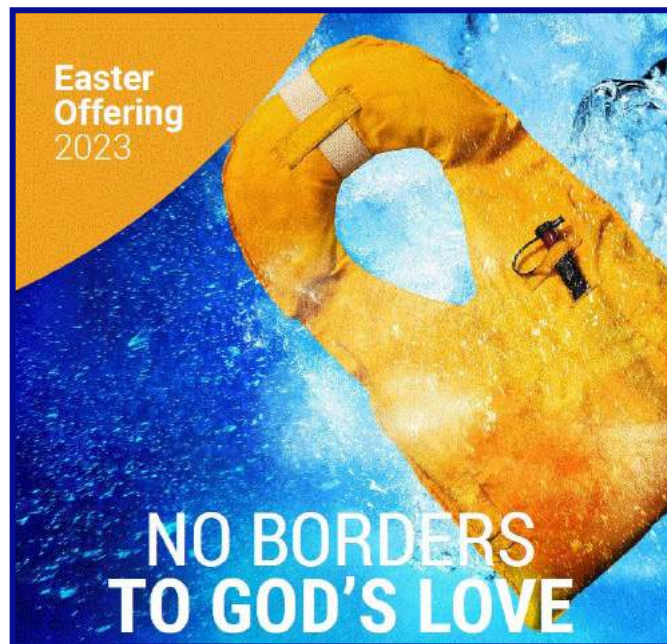
Leviticus 19: 34 (NIV)

“No Borders to God’s Love” offers churches, circuits and districts a celebration of God’s love and mission worldwide. It includes the dedication of the Easter Offering, all of which goes to the World Mission Fund of the Methodist Church in Britain, supporting and working with over 100 Partner Churches and organisations around the world.

Each year, the Methodist Church holds an Easter Offering dedication service. This tradition dates back to 1883, when women in Manchester collected £32 for missionary work overseas from ‘Christmas pennies’ at family gatherings on Christmas Day. In March 1884, the London Districts distributed Easter envelopes and collecting bags asking for a penny a head, and collected around £100. In 1900, Women’s Work raised £1,655 for the work of overseas missions.

Since then, each successive Methodist women’s movement has encouraged donations in support of God’s mission. Recently, Methodist Women in Britain (supported by the Global Relationships team) have produced an annual service of dedication, often used widely around the Connexion as a circuit service.

All the money raised through the Easter Offering goes to the World Mission Fund of the Methodist Church in Great Britain for work in our Partner Churches around the world.



GETTING STARTED ONLINE

Getting Started Online is a new course from the Methodist Church exploring our place in the digital world. It’s made up of 24 short videos and it will be launched on **Monday 20 February**. The dates are:

**Mon, 20 Feb – Mon, 20 Mar,
9.30 – 11am for 5 weeks**

**Wed, 22 Feb – Wed, 22 Mar
7 – 8.30pm for 5 weeks**

Sat, 11 Mar, 10.00am – 3.30pm

You can head to our [website](http://www.methodist.org.uk) (www.methodist.org.uk) now to find out more about the course and its content. Additionally, you can join our Facebook Group, [Getting Started Online](https://www.facebook.com/groups/gettingstartedonlinemethodistgb), (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/gettingstartedonlinemethodistgb>), which is designed for those of you who want to learn more and deepen your skills. It’s a safe place for conversation and questions, especially if the digital world is not your natural home and you’re not sure how or where to start!

The digital world is a mission field like any other and we are excited about the opportunity that it provides for us as a Church seeking to grow and reach out to all people.

***For posters and offering envelopes, and / or to
find out more about the “Getting Started
Online” course, please contact the Circuit
Administrator (details on Page 2).***

PUZZLE PAGE

With apologies to any republican friends reading this, I really couldn't resist!

**BANK HOLIDAY
CAMILLA
CAROLEAN
CELEBRATION
CHARLES III
CONSORT
CORONATION
CROWN
FANFARE
FUTURE
GOLDEN COACH
KING
LONDON
MONARCHY
PAGEANTRY
PROCESSION
ROYAL
STREET PARTY
TRADITION
UNITED KINGDOM**

X	U	I	P	R	O	C	E	S	S	I	O	N	Y	W	O	F
F	C	H	C	A	O	C	N	E	D	L	O	G	O	Q	U	U
C	Y	Y	A	D	I	L	O	H	K	N	A	B	M	T	N	Q
R	H	W	C	X	Y	S	T	D	K	G	K	O	U	I	Y	X
I	B	A	R	O	Y	R	Z	L	B	Z	N	R	T	G	O	E
F	N	Y	R	X	R	M	T	Q	J	A	E	E	D	E	E	C
U	J	T	C	L	N	O	W	N	R	R	D	A	P	Y	A	K
S	C	R	E	O	E	E	N	C	A	K	O	N	Q	R	X	Z
F	V	A	L	R	Q	S	H	A	I	E	O	Y	O	Y	L	J
B	C	P	E	J	A	Y	I	N	T	I	G	L	A	N	O	K
Y	O	T	B	K	N	F	G	I	T	I	E	A	W	L	J	Z
E	N	E	R	G	V	D	N	I	I	A	O	O	P	J	Y	G
M	S	E	A	O	O	Y	D	A	N	R	R	N	G	H	M	M
K	O	R	T	M	K	A	G	J	F	C	N	N	Y	S	E	A
A	R	T	I	V	R	P	L	A	L	L	I	M	A	C	K	N
J	T	S	O	T	L	B	L	V	A	K	P	W	F	G	V	Z
B	Z	N	N	K	A	J	W	N	O	D	N	O	L	G	O	M

Puzzle created by Joanna using wordmint.com

"I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth."

1 Timothy 2: 1 – 4 (NIV)

ADVENT	JOSEPH
AGES	MARY
ALL NATURE	POVERTY
ANGEL	REFUGEES
CHRISTMAS	REVELATION
DIFFERENCE	SHEEP
EPIPHANY	SHEPHERDS
GENDERS	THERE IS ROOM
GOD	WISE MEN
JESUS	YOU AND ME

WINTER WORD SEARCH SOLUTION

A	J	D	J	N	P	V	P	S	N	E	M	E	S	I	W	Y
G	S	D	R	E	H	P	E	H	S	A	D	S	G	H	R	Y
E	B	T	Y	E	S	E	H	N	M	R	P	H	C	A	F	O
M	V	O	K	R	G	U	E	Z	C	O	E	T	M	W	U	U
D	Y	Y	T	U	U	H	S	A	D	V	E	N	T	M	X	A
O	E	L	F	T	O	E	P	G	J	M	H	B	Y	O	E	N
V	M	E	A	A	S	F	P	E	R	A	S	R	S	O	O	D
D	R	G	I	N	A	Z	B	N	S	B	I	E	C	R	I	M
V	I	E	L	L	W	K	O	D	Q	O	G	U	H	S	Q	E
V	G	F	Y	L	Y	K	K	E	I	A	J	V	R	I	R	Y
Y	C	X	F	A	W	N	A	R	D	V	G	R	I	E	H	U
T	S	T	U	E	A	C	A	S	W	S	E	P	S	R	Z	T
R	V	G	G	H	R	N	I	H	Y	T	G	W	T	E	V	I
E	P	S	O	T	S	E	G	M	P	U	T	H	M	H	H	U
V	Y	Y	D	P	Z	P	N	E	H	I	F	B	A	T	Q	J
O	N	L	F	B	J	E	Z	C	L	N	P	C	S	Q	K	A
P	N	O	I	T	A	L	E	V	E	R	L	E	M	O	U	C



PRAY WITHOUT CEASING...

A PRAYER FOR TURKEY AND SYRIA

God of time and space, we cry to you for your children – our neighbours – in southern Turkey and northern Syria, following the earthquake that has devastated hundreds of lives. Only they and you know what it is like to experience such trauma in the middle of the night.

We give thanks for the aid that is already being given and for the promises of help that have been made by many nations.

Comfort, we pray,

those who are trapped in collapsed buildings;

those who have lost loved ones;

those who wait for news and

those digging through rubble to save others.

Grant the gift of hope so that those caught between life and death know that you are with them and that others are ready to support them as they seek a future that overshadows the experiences of today.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, who endured so much for love of them.

Amen.

Rev Graham Thompson, President of the Methodist Conference 2022 – 2023

Listed below are the familiar names of all the churches in the Gwent Hills and Vales Circuit. They represent so many beloved people, so much history, love and service for the Kingdom of God and so much life, in all its variety, abundance and challenge. In future editions of this magazine, we would love to share your joys, needs, victories and struggles as individual bodies of Christ within the whole, so that we can collectively lift them to our great and glorious Heavenly Father.

BEAUFORT HILL
BEDWAS
BLACKWOOD
BLAENAU GWENT
BLAINA
CASTLE STREET
CWMCELYN

FAIRHILL
GARNDIFFAITH
GLASBURY
GHAV ZOOM COMMUNITY
HOPE
LLANELLY HILL
LLANYRAFON
NANTYGLO
PONTLLANFRAITH
PONTNEWNYDD
RACE
ST JAMES
TREDEGAR
TRINITY
TYLLWYN
UPPER CWMBRAN
WESLEY PLACE