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TÂF RHYMNI
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MINISTRY AREA

District of Gelligaer Magazine:

Churches of
St. Catwg's, Gelligaer
St. Margaret's, Gilfach

*A welcoming Christian
community serving the people
of the District of Gelligaer.*

The Season of Advent.

What's in this edition!

Greetings from the Rectory.

Reader Writes.

District News/Messages.

Mothers' Union.

Quiz on John's Gospel

For the Children!

and More.....



**Therefore the Lord
Himself will give
you a sign:
Behold, a virgin will
be with child and
bear a son, and she
will call His name
Immanuel.**

Isaiah 7:14

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Who's Who (*District of Gelligaer*)

<u>Priest</u>	<u>Reader</u>
Fr. Gary Powell	Mrs. Carolyn Corbin
Tel: 01443 832119	Tel: 07983 677360
Email: GaryPowell@cinw.org.uk	Email: carolyncorbin63@aol.com

For general enquiries please do not hesitate contact Rev. Gary Powell or one of our wardens.

Ministry Area Leader's Wardens:

Vicar's Warden: Sue Hankins. Tel: 01443 820754
 People's Warden: Louise Lynch. Tel: 01685 552502

District of Gelligaer Wardens:

Vicar's Warden: Christine Thorpe. Tel: 01443 837482
 People's Warden: Huw Thomas. Tel: 01443 836613

Church Wardens

St. Catwg's Church, Gelligaer:

Vicar's Warden: Cheryl Pugh. Tel: 01443 837961
 People's Warden: Linda Hall. Tel: 01443 833961

St. Margaret's Church, Gilfach:

Vicar's Warden: Enid Mayne. Tel: 01443 268988
 People's Warden: Jeanette Jones. Tel: 01443 838908

Gift Aid Secretary

& Health & Safety..... Huw Thomas. Tel: 01443 836613

Safeguarding Officer Fr Gary Powell. Tel: 01443 832119

District Treasurer: Jenn East. Tel: 01443 839385

Magazine : Chris Corbin. Tel: 01443 833452
 Email: chriscorbin1961@gmail.com

Website: www.parishofgelligaer.org.uk

Facebook Page: <https://facebook.com/GelligaerParish/>

Greetings from the Rectory

Dear friends,

I write to you this month as we begin take our Advent journey toward Christmas. Throughout Advent, as we journey to Bethlehem to greet the Christ-child, we reflect on the developing relationship between God and his people revealed to us in the writings of the Old Testament. We honour the patriarchs, the first to hear and respond to the Word of God. We celebrate the prophets who spoke the Word of God to the people of Israel when they had turned their backs on the ways of God. We hear the call of John the Baptist calling us to repent our own sins and we give thanks for the Blessed Virgin Mary who answered the call of God and bore his Son into the world.



Christmas is a season of light and hope as we celebrate the incarnation, the coming of Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us. The promise of Advent is fulfilled with the birth of Christ. In Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, we receive the hope of a better future that only God can give, the hope that comes from knowing that we and everyone are loved by God and that we are all important to him. Yet as we look forward to our own celebrations we are reminded that Christmas can be a difficult time for many who are bereaved or lonely and our thoughts are with all who are in need at this time. We have seen so many victims of conflicts spreading around the world, so many injured, so many bereaved. At home more and more people fall into the official definitions of poverty, struggling from day to day to make ends meet. People for whom the thought of Christmas, or rather the commercial side of Christmas, brings only fear and anxiety.

As we look forward to Christmas and to celebrating the light of hope which the birth of the baby Jesus brings to us and to whole world, we look signs of hope for the future.

This year we will again hold our annual "Candle to Remember" services, our Carol Service and Christmas Services. Please see details of all our services on the Church newsletter, in our magazine or on our parish website and parish Facebook page.

Christmas is a very special time for many but also a difficult time for some. As we approach Christmas, we remember in our prayers all who are in any kind of need, the sick, the lonely and the bereaved and those without shelter or homes. There are many suffering from the cost of living crisis who despair of what the New Year will bring. For

many hope is fast disappearing. It is our prayer that they may know the peace and love of God this Christmas and that their sense of hope might be restored, that they may find strength and comfort from knowing that, in all our present difficulties, Jesus is with us all. May they know and find hope in the kindness of strangers. We give thanks for the works of a myriad of charities who work to bring hope and relief to those in need. Let us, each one, seek to bring hope in these dark days to all that we meet, let us work to restore trust between people and love for God.

**Every blessing from your friend and Priest,
Fr Gary.**

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CHRISTMAS IN THE DISTRICT OF GELLIGAER

“A CANDLE TO REMEMBER”

We offer the opportunity to remember our departed loved ones at Christmas with a special service of prayer and reflection and the invitation to light a candle in remembrance of loved ones.

St. Catwg’s Church, Gelligaer: Sunday, 15th December. 3.00pm
St. Margaret’s Church, Gilfach: Wednesday, 18th December 6.00pm

NINE LESSONS AND CAROLS

Our annual carol service takes place in St. Catwg’s Church, Gelligaer on
Sunday 22nd December at 6.00pm

CHRISTMAS HOLY EUCHARIST

Christmas Eve

Christmas Eucharist ‘Early Midnight Mass’ – St. Catwg’s - 7.00pm
Christmas Eucharist – St. Margaret’s - 10.00pm

Christmas Day

St. Margaret’s Church, Gilfach: 25th December 9.00am
St. Catwg’s Church, Gelligaer: 25th December 10.00am



Reader Writes.

Hi all,

During this time of year, the schools are busy as they are full of hustle and bustle with either individual classes or the whole school excitedly preparing and practicing for their Christmas concert or play to perform in front of family and friends.



Advent is a Latin word which means ‘coming.’

For us as Christians we are preparing for the coming of Jesus into the world and to remember the true meaning of Christmas and not the commercial aspect.

Whilst reading about Advent, I read words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer who describes Advent as being possible only to those who are troubled in soul, know themselves to be both poor and imperfect but who look forward to something greater to come.

Matthew Kelly, the theologian also speaks of Advent, reminding us of the words in St Mark’s Gospel to keep alert and awake as we do not know when he is coming.

This Advent, let us follow St Mark’s words and be ready to listen for God’s voice as we do not know where or when he will speak to us.

As we celebrate Christmas, may we realise how much we have to be thankful for and think of those who, for various reasons are less fortunate in not only our country but throughout the world.

Carolyn



Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in Luke chapter 2 verses 1-7

The Roman Empire charged the countries it had invaded taxes, based on the number of people and what they earned.

Emperor Augustus gave orders that all people in the Empire were to be registered so they could be taxed.



This census was before Quirinius became Governor of Syria* (*whose own census started riots - Acts 5:37)



When the order came, Mary and Joseph were living in Nazareth.

But Joseph was descended from King David, who had been born in Bethlehem...



so Joseph took Mary to Bethlehem to stay with his family.

Come and meet everyone!



A normal home in Bethlehem.



While they were staying there, Mary's baby was born.



There was no space in the guest room to put a new baby!

So they made a snug bed for Jesus in one of the mangers.



St. Nicholas, another look at this much-loved saint

One account of how Father Christmas began tells of a man named Nicholas who was born in the third century in the Greek village of Patara, on what is today the southern coast of Turkey. His family were both devout and wealthy, and when his parents died in an epidemic, Nicholas decided to use his inheritance to help people. He gave to the needy, the sick, the suffering. He dedicated his whole life to God's service, and was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man. As a bishop in later life, he joined other bishops and priests in prison under the emperor Diocletian's fierce persecution of Christians across the Roman Empire.

Finally released, Nicholas was all the more determined to shed abroad the news of God's love. He did so by giving. One story of his generosity explains why we hang Christmas stockings over our mantelpieces today. There was a poor family with three daughters who needed dowries if they were to marry, and not be sold into slavery. Nicholas heard of their plight, and tossed three bags of gold into their home through an open window – thus saving the girls from a life of misery.

The bags of gold landed in stockings or shoes left before the fire to dry. Hence the custom of children hanging out stockings – in the hope of attracting presents of their own from St Nicholas – on Christmas Eve. That is why three gold balls, sometimes represented as oranges, are one of the symbols of St Nicholas.

The example of St Nicholas has never been forgotten – in bygone years boys in Germany and Poland would dress up as bishops on 6th December, and beg alms for the poor. In the Netherlands and Belgium 'St Nicholas' would arrive on a steamship from Spain to ride a white horse on his gift-giving rounds. To this day, 6th December is still the main day for gift-giving and merry-making in much of Europe. Many feel that simple gift-giving in early Advent helps preserve a Christmas Day focus on the Christ Child.

Christmas Eve

How do you celebrate Christmas Eve? It has its own customs, the most popular of which is going to Midnight Mass, or the Christ-Mas. This is the only Mass of the year that is allowed to start after sunset. In Catholic countries such as Spain, Italy and Poland, Midnight Mass is in fact the most important church service of the entire Christmas season, and many people traditionally fast beforehand. In other countries, such as Belgium and Denmark, people dine during the evening, and then go on to the Midnight Service.

The British are behind some countries when it comes to exchanging presents: in Germany, Sweden and Portugal the custom is to exchange on Christmas Eve. But the British are ahead of Serbia and Slovakia, where the Christmas tree is not even brought into the house and decorated until Christmas Eve.

Yule logs are not so popular since the decline of the fireplace, but traditionally it was lit on Christmas Eve from a bit of the previous year's log, and then would be burned non-stop until 12th Night (6th January). Tradition also decreed that any greenery such as holly, ivy or mistletoe must wait until Christmas Eve until being brought into the house.

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Christmas throughout the Christian world

For nearly four weeks leading up to Christmas Christians recognise a period called Advent. It means 'coming'. It is a time of spiritual preparation. 'Coming' refers to Jesus' first coming as a baby, but it also looks forward to a day when Jesus is expected to return in triumph at his 'second coming' to establish perfect justice and a new order of peace.

Originally Christians marked Advent as a time when they refrained from excessive eating and drinking. Then Christmas Day reintroduced them to the joys of feasting. Christmas celebrations lasted for twelve days, with gifts exchanged as a climax at Epiphany (6 January). Today, however, Advent is more likely to be associated with accelerating festivity, with the days following Christmas something of an anti-climax until 'twelfth night', on which decorations are removed. Many Christians worldwide are trying to revive the spirit of Advent by setting aside time to pray and address global poverty.

Christmas Day is celebrated as the anniversary of Jesus' birth with most Christians celebrate it on 25th December. However, the Orthodox Church (the ancient churches in Eastern Europe and parts of Asia) follows a different calendar and celebrates on 7th January. Christians make a point of taking communion on Christmas Day. Many make it the first thing they do as the clock strikes midnight.

On 6th January the Christmas festival continues with a celebration of Epiphany, which means 'the appearance'. Christians remember the visit of wise men (magi) to Jesus, bringing gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. The Christmas tradition of exchanging gifts originally honoured these men, who were the first non-Jews (Gentiles) to worship Jesus. It forms a reminder that in Jesus God was giving Himself for the benefit of the entire world.

Orthodox Christians use this day to recall the baptism of Jesus as a grown man. The significance of Jesus being baptised was that He identified Himself with human beings in all their need. They mark the day by praying for God's blessing on rivers, wells and water sources.

Christmas has never been just an escapist festival for Christians. Those who treat it seriously recognise that not all the world is able to face the days with frivolity or joy. The day after Christmas, Boxing Day, was historically marked as the feast of St Stephen. He was the first man to be put to death rather than give up his belief that Jesus was God. And two days later a day remembering the Massacre of the Innocents recalls Herod's attempt to destroy Jesus by killing all male babies in Bethlehem. Although not so widely marked as Christmas Day, it gives Christians the opportunity to pray for children in today's world who suffer as a result of the actions of adults.

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A bunch of faded flowers at the roadside lie,
some thoughtless child had picked them and left them there to die.
How cruel to Gods creation, his wondrous to destroy,
his beauty that he gave to every girl and boy.

Author: Unknown

From our Churches and Community

Christmas Prize Draw 2024



Draw will take place at Neuadd St Catwg Hall on Friday 13th December at 7.00pm. A buffet will be provided. Look forward to seeing you all there. **Everyone is welcome!**

An update on our Autumn Fayre, this was another successful event. We raised over £900.00 and money is still coming in. Thank you to all who helped, made cakes, pickles, donated, set up stalls and put them away, we are truly thankful. I will give the final sum raised in the new year. **Social club team.**

Glyn-Gaer Primary School

Glyn-Gaer Primary School is fully committed to engaging with its families and community and has done for many years. Its embedded practice was recently showcased during an assessment with 'Foundation of Community Engagement' director, Sue Davies. The school offers a wide range of opportunities from coffee mornings, curriculum workshops and learning together sessions as well as engages with a host of community events. Parent/carer voice is captured and responses used in a 'You said, we did' model which assures views are valued, acted upon, and considered for future events and school development.

The school's strong pupil voice, positive relationship with its families and its extensive community engagement has resulted in Glyn-Gaer Primary School receiving the bronze and the silver status.

Congratulations to everyone involved!



Sue Davies, commented,

'a whole school consistent approach to engagement. Amazing partnerships, focused strategies and innovative processes, resulting in exciting community engagement. We are delighted to be working with you.'

The school's Head teacher and Chair of Governors, would like to thank all of its staff, governors and school community for their

participation and commitment to this very important agenda. An additional thank you is given to the school's community governors, P.T.A. and the school's Family Engagement Officer, for all their hard work and commitment leading up to and on the assessment day.

The School's ongoing commitment to continuing to develop their community engagement is reflected in its busy schedule of events which includes, Welsh language courses, learning about how to help their child at home, as well as, events supported by the local community and businesses. The school's journey will continue with a focus on analysing, mapping and responding to the ever-changing needs of its community. The school are also looking forward to the launch of a new family and community room which will provide even more opportunities for exciting engagement events that will benefit our children, the school and its whole community.

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As you know by now, I do communicate with you all, in some way or another, I am a God that understands. I have always been around, There is so much more to me than you know. I am gentle, kind, loving and giving. There was no other way when Jesus went to the cross. I know you wish that there was another way, but there wasn't. I know he suffered. I also know that some of you, if not most of you, have suffered in the same way. But you came through it. Let me tell you, bad times they do pass. You all have a guardian angel, just call on them in your lives. I tell you now, don't be in fear or afraid to speak out. Some of you can, if your willing can give your testimony on how you became a Christian. I know some of you have been for life. Talk on how you became a follower of Christ. Some of you haven't had a very good life, many upsets and problems, but you are very strong, Stronger than you know. I will write you all a poem.

There was a searing loss
when Jesus went to the cross.
The agony and the pain
he felt time and time again.

He was afraid, but not ashamed to cry
feelings that go away.
I knew the storm of that day
it was the only way.

The time had to pass by
reach out to the sky.
They buried him in a tomb
there was no more room.

Now in heaven he abides with me
sitting on the right hand as we see.
Holding each of you in is heart
now, will never be apart.

Jane Carpenter

God in the Arts

Editor: The Rev Michael Burgess begins a year-long series looking at great works of Christian music.

‘Glorious the song when God’s the theme’: Morten Lauridsen, American composer

In the Middle Ages, at the end of the Christmas Midnight Mass, the clergy would often tell the animals’ version of the Nativity story and imitate the sound of each animal. The cock would crow ‘Christus natus est.’ (Christ is born). The cows would moo ‘Ubi?’ (Where?). The sheep would bleat ‘In Bethlehem.’ And the donkey would cry ‘Eamus’ (Let us go there). It was a way of expressing something of the joy and fun of the Christmas celebration.

Commercialism with all its trappings has sadly made that fun and festivity the be all and end all of Christmas. We need to capture again the heart of the Incarnation, which is a mystery rooted in silence and wonder. The book of Wisdom reads ‘For while gentle silence enveloped all things, and night in its swift course was now half gone, the all powerful Word leapt from heaven, from the royal throne.’

Those words remind us that at Bethlehem there is that silence and wonder. The animals may rejoice to tell the Good News of the Incarnation at the Midnight Mass, but at the crib they gather with the Holy Family and the shepherds. We are given no words of Mary and Joseph and the shepherds around the crib. The mystery of what was happening seems to have intensified their silence. They did not know what the future held for this new-born child, but they did know that God was acting in a special way. They were like people standing in the faint light of the dawn, and their response was an expectant and wondering worship.

It is at the heart of this month’s beautiful and moving setting of some words from the matins of Christmas morning, ‘O magnum mysterium.’ ‘O great mystery and wondrous sacrament, that animals should see the new-born Lord, lying in the manger. Blessed Virgin, whose womb was found worthy to bear Christ the Lord. Alleluia.’ The words were set by the American composer, Morten Lauridsen in 1994 and first performed a few days before Christmas in Los Angeles. Since then, the setting has been sung by choirs, both professional and amateur, around the world.

Morten Lauridsen has composed many works for the human voice, and all of them are sensitive and heartfelt responses to the words chosen. No

more so than in ‘O magnum mysterium.’ After the opening chord, the altos introduce us to a motif that pervades the work: D to a rising 4th, and a falling 3rd that lights on A. It is like the movement of the heart, rising in praise and resting in hope at the mystery of the Incarnation. The joy is inner and deep and suffuses the music as it reaches a climax with Alleluia. The final words are that all this glory lies in a manger, where the animals gather.

The world will call us in this month to a frenzy of doing and buying amid a clamour of noise and muzak. ‘O magnum mysterium’ by Morten Lauridsen invites us to step into the stable again and join the animals, the Holy Family and the shepherds to find a joy and a wonder there that can nourish the soul. At the crib we can know ‘the silence of eternity interpreted by Love’ and with the choir we can respond Alleluia.

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God in the Sciences

This series is written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge. Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

Meditation on the Incarnation

*After the bright beam of annunciation
fused heaven with dark earth
His searing sharply-focused light
went out for a while
eclipsed in amniotic gloom:
His cool immensity of splendour
His universal grace
small-folded in a warm dim
female space*

This extract from Luci Shaw’s poem Made Flesh captures something of the wonder of the moment when the second person of the Trinity became an embryo.

How does a single cell turn into an infant, and what does that process say about us – and God? These are the questions that Professor Jeff Hardin, a developmental biologist, asks himself. Having studied theology as well as science, he has a unique perspective on embryonic development.

A new-born baby is made of around five trillion cells. These cells come in hundreds of different types, each of which must be in the correct place for the child's body to function properly. Every new life is the result of intricate and highly ordered processes. Three things must happen as an embryo develops.

The first important process is for cells to take on their identity as types of muscle, bone, nerves, and so on. The second is when each cell learns which part of the body it belongs to. Third, those cells are moved around to form the different tissues and organs. These three are not discrete stages, but they all happen at around the same time, building up gradually like the different aspects of a picture coming into focus.

All three of these processes are driven forward by the movement of cells, the connections between them, and the signals they pass to each other. Jeff studies a sort of cellular glue which is involved in joining cells together. Making and breaking these adhesions can affect how cells move and signal to each other, their identity in the body, how they are organised as groups, and ultimately their survival. This glue is found on the surface of cells throughout the animal kingdom, including the small worms Jeff's lab studies.

For Jeff, peering down a microscope at tiny worm embryos can be an act of worship. It is also an exercise in art appreciation, as he learns to appreciate the created order. Understanding the complexities of development, while also being aware that God knows that process intimately both as Creator and created, fills Jeff with a profound sense of awe, wonder and worship.

Does the minute scale of our early development, compared to the incomprehensibly vast and ancient universe, give us a sense of insignificance? Psalm 8 says, "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?"

For Jeff and the Psalmist, such feelings can be a positive experience if they serve as a reminder to be humble in the face of a universe that is vastly complicated but also deeply meaningful, made by a God who loves each one of us.

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Mothers' Union



Our usual activities continued through October and November. At our meeting in November Jenn and Lynne read stories of two women from the Mothers' Union magazine entitled Women of the Nativity. As usual Jenn and Lynne read these two stories with such emotion for us to realise what life was like for them at that time. Jenn bought these books from Mothers' Union magazine and has now read several to us. It becomes an entertaining evening and improves our knowledge and understanding of what the women in Jesus' life was like. The books are obviously well worth reading and perhaps giving as a Christmas present to a friend. I have already put three orders into the M.U. magazine – all for over £150 so they will benefit from this amount. This year the process of ordering and delivery has been excellent. Each order has arrived within one to three days. The cards are good value and at least we are able to buy Christian cards with the right message of Christmas – something that is hard to find in card shops.

At the meeting I read out the notice I receive every month on the website updating all that is going on. I have just had this month's but once again it is too long to print here but I will precis it at our meeting in December. Most of it is a continuation of last month's edition. We are going out for our Christmas lunch on 10th December so that morning's coffee morning will be delayed until the 17th. We will have our meeting on the 3rd with mince pies and hopefully a carol sing song. The children who kindly clean the church every week will be helping us to put the tree up at the end of November so it should look quite festive for our evening. We heartily thank the children for all the work they have done these last months. It's been such a help.

At the time of writing this it is the day before our Deanery meeting, so will relay any news from that meeting to our next meeting. We haven't had a Deanery meeting for a long while so perhaps there will be some news. We were asked if we would donate towards a gift for Sue Rivers and it was agreed that June and I would take a donation of £20 to the meeting. We wish Sue every success in her new position.

I hope you all have a Blessed and Peaceful Christmas and look forward to seeing you in the New Year, with hopefully someone willing to take over any vacant positions. Think about it – not what our Mothers' Union and church can do for us but what we can do for them. There's plenty of talent in our church.

God Bless

Kath

Thank Dickens for Christmas as you know it!



Ever wonder where many of our Christmas traditions come from? A surprising amount of our modern Christmas celebrations can be traced back to the well-loved story of ‘A Christmas Carol’, by Charles Dickens.

When you read ‘A Christmas Carol’, you discover almost a template of the ‘ideal Christmas’ which we still hold dear today. Dickens seems to have selected the best of the Christmas celebrations of his day (he ignored some of the odd excesses) and packaged them in such a way as to give us traditions that we could accommodate and treasure – more than a century later.

So, for instance, in A Christmas Carol, Christmas is a family day, with a family-centred feast. In a home decorated with holly and candles the characters enjoy a roast turkey, followed by Christmas pudding. They give their loved ones presents. Scrooge even gives donations to charity (!).

And all the while outside, there is snow and frost, while church bells ring, and carol singers sing, and hope for mulled wine. In ‘A Christmas Carol’ there is even a Father Christmas – in the shape of Christmas Present. Only the Christmas tree itself came later, when Prince Albert imported ‘a pretty German toy’ that won the heart of the English court, and hence the rest of Victorian society.

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Where did Christmas stockings come from?

No one is really sure, but a story is told of St Nicholas, a bishop who lived in the 4th century, who may have started the custom by accident. St Nicholas was of a wealthy family, and of a generous heart. As Christmas approached one year, he wanted to help a poor family whom he knew, but he did not want them to know it was him. So he climbed up on their roof on Christmas Eve and dropped some coins down the chimney.



The next morning the coins, to the great surprise of the family, were found in the stockings of the ladies, who had hung them to dry by the fire the night before. Every year after that they put their stockings out, in the hope that some more money would fall into them. They told the story of this amazing appearance to their friends and neighbours, and the custom caught on.

Glyn-Gaer Primary School

The children of Glyn-Gaer Primary School have been busy reading and writing poetry this month. The school's "post a poem" initiative has seen the whole school engaging in poetry with their poetry post box filled to the brim with their favourite poems and own original poetry. Harvest, Black History Month and their school grounds have inspired their writing.

Autumn

Leaves are falling,
Birds are singing,
The branches are wet,
Rain is dripping,
Kids are playing,
Dogs are on an Autumn walk,
Trees are swishing in the wind,
People watch the squirrels play,
They are looking for nuts all day
Grass has stopped growing so have the flowers,
The nights are getting dark now,
It's cold outside,
Wrap up warm in Autumn time.

By Ellie Year 2

A poem inspired by the Autumn season.

Happy

Happy is my favourite word,
No need to sad just sing like a bird,
Smile, smile, smile all of the time
Laugh don't cry, dance, twist and
Everything will be fine

By Billie-Jo Reception

A poem about feelings from one of our youngest learners linking with our Theme Outside Inside.

Mae'r athro yn dweud

Mae'r athro yn dweud bwyta tatws,
Mae'r athro yn dweud yfed sudd pinafal,
Mae'r athro yn dweud chwarae rygbi
Mae'n dda i chi!

Mae'r athro yn dweud bwyta caws
Mae'r athro yn dweud yfed sudd oren
Mae'r athro yn dweud chwarae pêl-droed
Mae'n dda i chi!

Mae'r athro yn dweud bwyta afal,
Mae'r athro yn dweud yfed sudd afal,
Mae'r athro yn dweud reidio bike,
Mae'n dda i chi!

Mae'r athro yn dweud bwyta moron
Mae'r athro yn dweud yfed dŵr
Mae'r athro yn dweud mynd i redeg
Mae'n dda i chi!

Mae'r athro yn dweud bwyta oren,
Mae'r athro yn dweud yfed llaeth,
Mae'r athro yn dweud mynd i nofio,
Mae'n dda i chi!

Ond sir,
Pam wyt ti'n bwyta cacen siocled?
"Byddwch yn dawel!" mae'r athro yn dweud.

By children from Year 4

One year 4 class worked in groups to write a class poem in Welsh for our Harvest festival.



What's the Big Idea? -

An Introduction to the Books of the New Testament: John



‘John’s Gospel is like a pool in which a child may wade and an elephant can swim. It is for the beginner in the faith and for the mature Christian.’ (Leon Morris).

The Apostle John is usually credited with the authorship of this Gospel, writing in Ephesus at the end of the First Century. His purpose is ‘that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.’ (20:31). Throughout he stresses the deity of Christ and presents Jesus as the Son of God.

In the prologue (1:1-14) Jesus is presented as the pre-existent and incarnate Word of God revealed by the Father. It also highlights how He has come as light into the world, so that those who believe in Him will not remain in darkness (cf 12:46).

The heart of John’s narrative contains 7 signs or miracles, which demonstrate who Jesus is and demonstrating His transforming power over creation and people: turning water into wine (2:1-11); healing the royal official's son (4:46-54); healing the paralytic (5:1-18); feeding the 5000 (6:1-14); walking on the water (6:16-21); healing of the man born blind (9:1-41) and raising Lazarus (11:1-44).

After these signs, the story moves into the upper room discourses followed by the story of His death and resurrection. The whole Gospel is a revelation of the glory of God's only Son, who comes to reveal the Father and then returns in glory to the Father. It can be well summed up in the famous verse: ‘For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.’ (John 3:16).

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Shoebox Appeal 2024

I would like to thank those members from St Catwg's and St Margaret's churches and the wider community for participating in the shoebox appeal this year.

80 boxes were completed, blessed by Father Gary and then taken to the collection point at Bedwas. Thanks to Marilyn, Jeanette, Pat and Lynda for their help in transporting the boxes.

Joan

**Short quiz on
John's Gospel** (Ans page 27)

1. Why was John the Baptist sent from God?

*To perform miracles and signs
To bear witness of the light
To explain the writings of the prophets*

2. What did John the Baptist say when he saw Jesus?

*Behold the Saviour of the world!
You are the true Son of God
Behold the Lamb of God!*

3. Where did Jesus see Nathanael?

*Under the fig tree
Under the almond branch
Within the house*

4. What happened at the marriage of Cana?

*Jesus healed a crippled man
Jesus turned water into wine
Jesus forgave the couple's sins*

5. To whom did Jesus say, "Ye must be born again"?

*Nicodemus
Simon of Cyrene
Joseph of Arimathea*

6. What did Jesus say He could give the woman of Samaria?

*Bread of life
Living water
Eternal life*

7. How long had the infirm man lain at the pool of Bethesda?

*1 year
25 years
38 years*

8. Which of these is not declared as a witness of Jesus?

*Nature and creation
John the Baptist
The work God gave Jesus*

9. What teaching of Jesus did the Jews not understand?

*The kingdom of God is nigh at hand
I am the bread which came down from heaven
He who is not for me, is against me*

10. What did Jesus say to those who accused the adulteress?

*He that is without sin, let him first cast a stone
Take her and stone her
What has she to do with me?*

11. Which two signs, or miracles, are also recorded in other gospel records?

*Feeding of the 5,000, raising of Lazarus
Feeding of the 5,000, Jesus walks on water
Raising of Lazarus, the catch of fishes*

12. How did Jesus heal the blind man?

*He touched his eyes and scales fell off them
He anointed his eyes with oil
He anointed his eyes with clay and told him to wash*

13. Which profession does Jesus compare Himself to spiritually?

*Shepherd
Fisherman
Carpenter*

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Services and Holy Days

Celebrations of the Holy Eucharist will be held twice weekly in both our Churches:

*St. Margaret's each Sunday at 9.30am and each Wednesday at 10.00am.
St. Catwg's each Sunday at 11.00am and each Thursday at 10.00am.*

<i>Date.</i>		<i>Services and Holy Days - 2024</i>
<i>1st Dec</i>		THE FIRST SUNDAY of ADVENT
<i>8th Dec</i>		THE SECOND SUNDAY of ADVENT
<i>15th Dec</i>		THE THIRD SUNDAY of ADVENT
<i>22nd Dec</i>		THE FOURTH SUNDAY of ADVENT
<i>25th Dec</i>		THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD Christmas Day
<i>29th Dec</i>		THE FIRST SUNDAY of CHRISTMAS



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<https://llandaff.churchinwales.org.uk/en/> then sign up to the mailing list.



District of Gelligaer Website

Scan the QR code on your smart phone, then open in browser to visit our website or visit us on

<https://www.parishofgelligaer.org.uk>

The District of Gelligaer

would like to
wish everyone a
Blessed and
Peaceful
Christmas and a
Happy and
Healthy New
Year.

*"For to us a child is born, to us
a son is given, and the
government will be on his
shoulders.*

*And he will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty
God, Everlasting Father, Prince
of Peace."*

Isaiah 9:6



Wishing everyone in the district and community a Blessed and Holy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year. **Fr. Gary**



Christmas Greetings from

Carolyn, Chris and family would like to wish everyone a Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.
God Bless.

Jeanette and Gareth wish all family, friends and the community a Blessed and Peaceful Christmas.

Wishing everyone a Blessed and peaceful Christmas.

Christine, Huw, Jeanette and Enid

Best wishes to everyone at St. Margaret's and St. Catwg's, for Christmas and the new year, also thank you for your care and support.
Sue Stevens

Celebrating the true meaning of Christmas with all of you.

Jenn East

Very best wishes to all our friends in Saint Catwg's and Saint Margaret's. Hope you all have a blessed Christmas and a happy and peaceful New Year.
Cheryl and Linda.



Wishing you all a "Happy, healthy and Blessed Christmas."

Huw, Lynne and Family

Wishing everyone at St. Margaret's Church a Merry Christmas and a Happy New year.
Audrey & Ray Powell

om around the Parish



Best wishes for Christmas
and the new year to all at
St. Margaret's and
St. Catwg's, and
thankyou for your
support
David and Nesta

We wish Father Gary
and all our friends at St.
Margaret's a happy
Christmas and many
blessing.
Joan and Jane.

Seasons Greetings to
everyone in the Parish of
Gelligaer.
With love from,
David and Christine

Wishing all our friends at
St. Margaret's and
St. Catwg's a happy
and blessed Christmas.
Lynne and Warren

Neil and Iiris,
send all our Church family
at St. Margaret's and
St. Catwg's our love and
all good wishes at this Holy
and joyful time.

Wishes to everyone at
St. Margaret's and St.
Catwg's for a happy
Christmas and a healthy
and safe New Year.
Hilda and Gwyn

With blessings for a
happy and peaceful
Christmas.
Corrine and Beryl

Wishing all members of St.
Catwg's, St. Margaret's
and the community a
peaceful and Blessed
Christmas and a healthy
and happier New Year.
Pat and Joan.

December's Sudoku Challenge



		1		7				3
			8				7	
		5				6		
1				4			3	
9			7		6			5
	8			3				1
		6				5		
	9				4			
4				8		7		

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Solution can be found on page 43



You are warmly invited to join us for

A CANDLE TO REMEMBER

A Service of Remembrance for our departed loved ones



During the service there will be an opportunity to light a candle in remembrance of loved ones and we will remember by name all at whose funerals we have officiated this year.

Identical services will be held at:

St. Catwg's Church, Gelligaer, 3.00pm Sunday 15th December

St. Margaret's Church, Gilfach, 6.00pm Wednesday 18th December

January's Magazine 2025

If you wish to contribute to our magazine, please can you forward any news, articles etc, to me by Monday 16th December, for inclusion in the January's edition.

Many Thanks Chris (email: chriscorbin1961@gmail.com)

Christmas Prayer

Father, Thank you for creating us and for loving us so much that you sent Jesus to become one of us and to be our way to you.

This Christmas may we know the love, peace, comfort and joy that only You can give, no matter what our circumstances. And may we reflect Your light and love in this dark world to bring glory to You. In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

By Daphne Kitching



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What would you like for Christmas?


A little girl went to visit Father Christmas in the local garden centre grotto. He welcomed her with a smile and the question of what she would like for Christmas.

The little girl gasped and stared up at him in horror. "Didn't you get my email?!"

Church rules

Six-year-old Angie and her four-year-old brother Joel sat together for the Christmas concert in church. Joel kept giggling and whispering until his big sister had had enough. "Be quiet in church!"

"Why?" Joel demanded. "Who is going to make me?" Angie pointed to the back of the church and said: "See those two big men standing at the door? They're hashers."

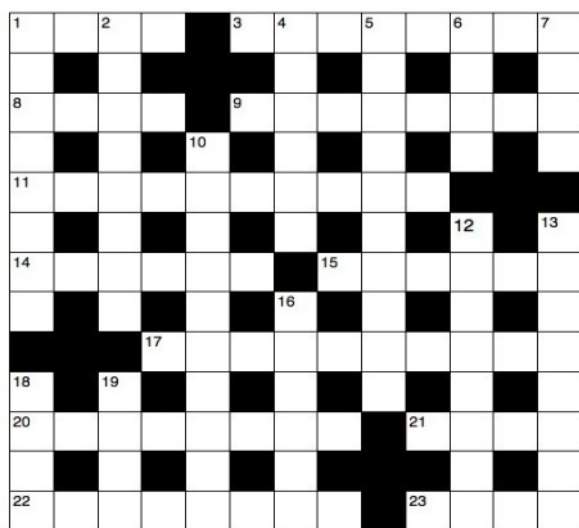


Father Christmas

Of course, I had expected that by the age of seven it was inevitable that my son would begin to have serious thoughts about Father Christmas. Sure enough, one day near Christmas he suddenly said: "Mum, I know something about Father Christmas, the Easter Bunny and the Tooth Fairy." Taking a deep breath, I asked him what that might be. "Easy," he said, "They are all nocturnal."



December's Crossword



Challenge

Across

- 1 'The blind receive sight, the — walk' (Luke 7:22) (4)
- 3 Got (Philippians 3:12) (8)
- 8 Leave out (Jeremiah 26:2) (4)
- 9 Castigated for using dishonest scales (Hosea 12:7) (8)
- 11 Weighty (1 John 5:3) (10)
- 14 'Now the serpent was more — than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made' (Genesis 3:1) (6)
- 15 'Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot — God' (Romans 8:8) (6)
- 17 Because Israel lacked one of these, tools had to be sharpened by the Philistines (1 Samuel 13:19) (10)
- 20 In his vision of the two eagles and the vine, this is how Ezekiel described the latter (Ezekiel 17:8) (8)
- 21 Rite (anag.) (4)
- 22 Nine gigs (anag.) (8)
- 23 'The eye cannot say to the — , "I don't need you"' (1 Corinthians 12:21) (4)



Down

- 1 'Flee for your lives! Don't — — , and don't stop anywhere in the plain!' (Genesis 19:17) (4,4)
- 2 Principal thoroughfare (Numbers 20:19) (4,4)
- 4 'The tax collector... beat his — and said, "God have mercy on me, a sinner"' (Luke 18:13) (6)
- 5 'The zeal of the Lord Almighty will — this' (2 Kings 19:31) (10)
- 6 'The day of the Lord is — for all nations' (Obadiah 15) (4)
- 7 Specified day (Acts 21:26) (4)
- 10 Deadly epidemic (Deuteronomy 32:24) (10)
- 12 Roman Catholic church which has special ceremonial rights (8)
- 13 Tied up (2 Kings 7:10) (8)
- 16 In his speech to the Sanhedrin, Stephen described Moses as 'powerful in speech and — ' (Acts 7:22) (6)
- 18 'Although he did not remove the high places, — heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life' (1 Kings 15:14) (4)
- 19 Tribe (Deuteronomy 29:18) (4)

Crossword solution - Page 43

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Quiz on John's Gospel.

Answers:

- | | |
|--|---|
| Q1 To bear witness of the light (John 1:6-7) | Q7 38 years (John 5:5) |
| Q2 Behold the Lamb of God (John 1:36) | Q8 Nature and creation (John 5:31-47) |
| Q3 Under the fig tree (John 1:48) | Q9 I am the bread which came down from heaven (John 6:41) |
| Q4 Jesus turned water into wine (John 2:1-10) | Q10 He that is without sin, let him first cast a stone (John 8:7) |
| Q5 Nicodemus (John 3:1) | Q11 Feeding of the 5,000, Jesus walks on water (John 6) |
| Q6 Living water (John 4:9-10) | Q12 He anointed his eyes with clay and told him to wash (John 9:6-7) |
| | Q13 Carpenter (John 10:11) |

Book Reviews

The Moment of Truth - Reflections on Incarnation and Resurrection

By Samuel Wells, Canterbury Press, £11.69

Christmas and Easter, Advent and Lent, each focus on the central beliefs of Christian faith - that in the Incarnation, God comes among us, and that in the Resurrection, death is defeated and creation is renewed.

In this collection of seasonal reflections, Samuel Wells unpacks the substance of these key Christian doctrines, and explores their practical implications for living as Christians in the world: - Laid in a Manger: Reflections on the Nativity - The Word was Made Flesh: Reflections on Christmas - The Image of the Invisible God: Reflections on the Incarnation - Early on the First Day of the Week: Reflections on Easter Morning - I have Seen the Lord: Reflections on the Risen Christ.

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The Extra Special Baby - Story of the Christmas Promise

By Antonia Woodward, SPCK, £10.99



A long time ago, a long way away, some very clever men discovered an exciting promise! For in Bethlehem one night, under the quiet starry sky, an Extra Special Baby was born.

This beautiful retelling of the Nativity story will take children back to the excitement of that very first Christmas night, when life on earth would change forever. A helpful picture book to share with a child at bedtime, or with a group of children during the Christmas season.

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Church Reading / Cleaning Rotas

If anyone wishes to be on either the readers rota for either church, please do not hesitate to contact the relevant church wardens.

St. Catwg's Church - Readers Rota

December 2024		January 2025		February 2025	
1st	Christine Harvey	5th	Cheryl Pugh	2nd	Pat Davies
8th	Joan Jenkins	12th	Janeve Manca	9th	Paul Thomas
15th	Pat Davies	19th	Christine Harvey	16th	Cheryl Pugh
22nd	Paul Thomas	26th	Joan Jenkins	23rd	Janeve Manca
29th	Cheryl Pugh				

St. Margaret's Church - Readers Rota

December 2024		January 2025		February 2025	
1st	Kath Llewellyn	5th	June Phillips	2nd	Kath Llewellyn
8th	Enid Mayne	12th	Alex Ball	9th	Christine Thorpe
15th	Huw Thomas	19th	Audrey Powell	16th	Enid Mayne
22nd	Jenn East	26th	Chris Ball	23rd	Huw Thomas
29th	Jennette Jones				

Should you wish to be on the St. Margaret's cleaning rota please contact the relevant Church Wardens.

St. Margaret's Cleaning Rota

December 2024			January 2025			February 2025		
1	Lynda Trollope	Enid	5	Lynda Bartlett	Sue	2	Lynda Bartlett	Sue
8	Jennette	Audrey	12	Lynda Trollope	Enid	9	Lynda Trollope	Enid
15	Kath	June	19	Jennette	Audrey	16	Jennette	Audrey
22	Lynda Bartlett	Sue	26	Kath	June	23	Kath	June
29	Lynda Trollope	Enid						

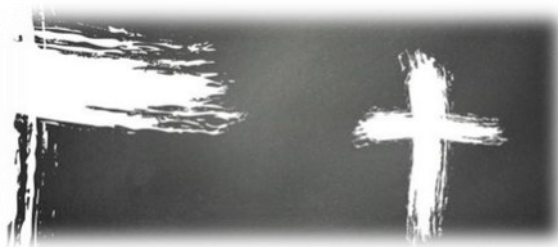
From the Register

Christian Funerals

November 2024

<i>5th</i>	Margaret Davies RIP
<i>6th</i>	Joan Morris RIP
<i>13th</i>	Kathleen Nancy Brown RIP
<i>15th</i>	Owen David Hibbert RIP

*May the souls of the faithful departed,
through the mercy of God, rest in peace.*





Gone yet not forgotten,
Although we are apart,
Your spirit lives within me,
Forever in my heart.
Until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of His hand.

Author Unknown

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Prayers for the Bereaved

*May the love of God and the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ
console you and gently wipe away every tear from your eyes.
May Almighty God bless you, and look after you at this
difficult time. Amen.*

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*Lord, in our time of grief we turn to you. God of love
hear our cries. Listen to our prayers for whom
you have called out of this world. Lead them to
your kingdom of light and peace. Amen.*

For the Younger Generation.

A Very Special Baby

JESUS WAS BORN ABOUT 2,000 YEARS AGO IN THE SMALL TOWN OF BETHLEHEM, NEAR JERUSALEM.



AN ANGEL HAD TOLD MARY SHE WOULD HAVE A VERY SPECIAL BABY.

...YOU MUST CALL YOUR BABY JESUS



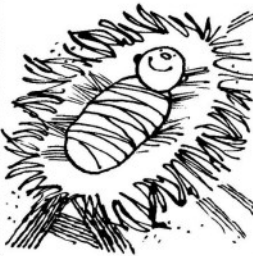
MARY AND JOSEPH MADE THE LONG JOURNEY FROM NAZARETH TO BETHLEHEM. THEY HAD BEEN ORDERED THERE FOR THE CENSUS.

BUT THE TOWN WAS FULL



THE ONLY SHELTER THEY COULD FIND WAS A STABLE...

...WHICH IS WHERE JESUS WAS BORN.



SHEPHERDS IN FIELDS NEARBY RACED TO SEE THE BABY



AN ANGEL HAD TOLD THEM WHERE JESUS HAD BEEN BORN.

WISE MEN CAME FROM THE EAST. THEY TOO WANTED TO SEE JESUS. THEY HAD BEEN GUIDED BY A STAR.



THEY BROUGHT GIFTS OF GOLD, FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH.

BUT MARY, JOSEPH AND BABY JESUS SOON HAD TO ESCAPE TO EGYPT...



...AS KING HEROD WANTED JESUS DEAD!!



Mouse Makes

"The child to be born will be called H _____, the _____ of _____"
Luke 1:35

THE GREATEST GIFT

"She will bear a son, and shall call his name _____"

"For unto you is born this day a S _____ who is _____ R _____ the _____ R _____"
Luke 2:11

_____ for he will save his people from their sins."
Matthew 1:21

"Jesus said, I am the _____ Y _____ and the _____ U _____ and the _____ I _____.
 No one comes to the Father except through me."
John 14:6

"Jesus said, I am the _____ and the life."
John 11:25

B L I G H T L O
 R A Y W O J J R
 E M M A N U E L
 A B Y J E S O
 D S A V I O U R
 S A V R J S D

O H O L Y O R C R T U
 S O N O F M A N H A R T
 N L S H E P H E R D U
 O Y A E P E R G I F T G
 C H R I S T M A S T H S
 R E S U R R E C T I O N

JESUS
 THE
 GREATEST
 GIFT
 OF ALL!

P R O P H E T I
 R E D E E M E R
 I E M I L I G
 E M E S S I A H
 S R M E G F T
 T E A C H E R E

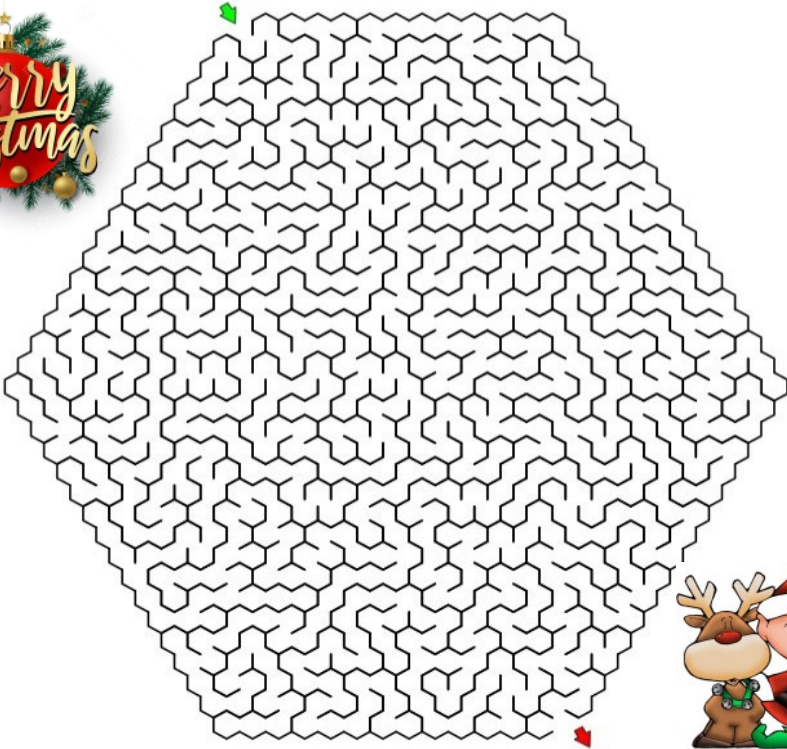
E V E R L A S T I N G
 K I N G O F K I N G S
 I N K I G W F D O U
 S E S O N O F G O D D
 S E W O C O U W O R D
 C O U N S E L L O R U

- EMMANUEL • MESSIAH REDEEMER • KING OF KINGS • WORD
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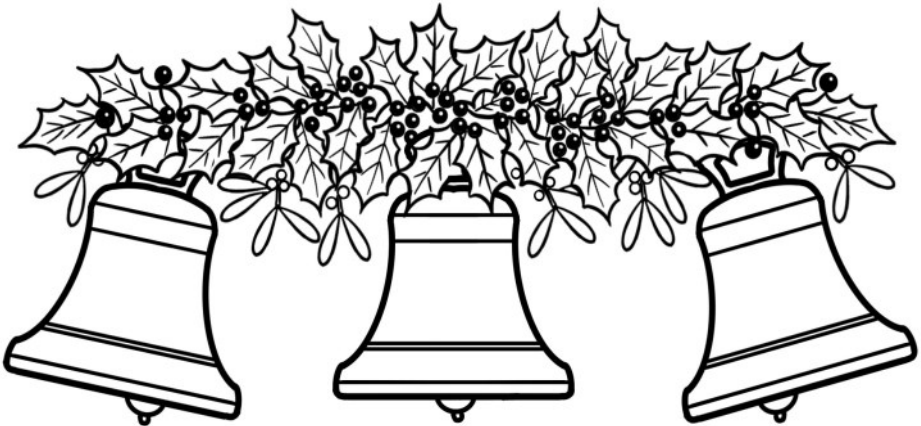
Find the words from the Bible verses too!

Dec24 © deborah noble @ parishpump.co.uk

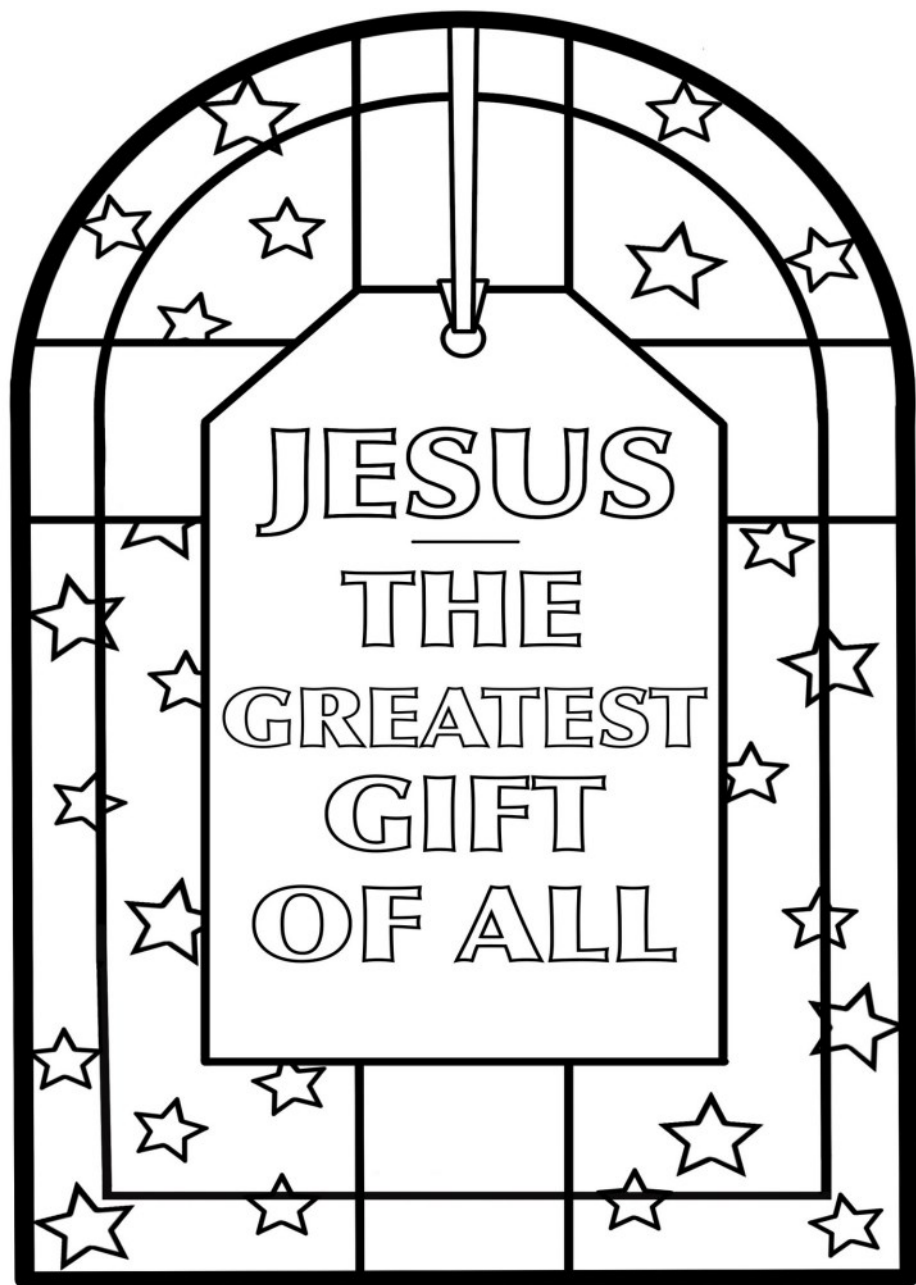
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chriscorbin1961@gmail.com



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Christine Harvey: 01443 833123



Christine Harvey 01443 833123 /

Service Times

Celebrations of the Holy Eucharist will be held twice weekly in both our Churches:

*St. Catwg's each Sunday at 11.00am and each Thursday at 10.00am and
St. Margaret's each Sunday at 9.30am and each Wednesday at 10.00am.*

Both of our Churches have a friendly and welcoming atmosphere where you can worship our Lord, Jesus Christ. Everybody is welcome to attend any of our services listed below. If it is your first visit to the District of Gelligaer and you are new to our Church please do not hesitate to make yourself known to us.

SUNDAY

9.30 am. Sung Eucharist at St. Margaret's Church

1st Sunday of each Month - Family Services

11.00 am. Sung Eucharist at St. Catwg's Church

WEDNESDAY

10.00 am. Holy Eucharist at St. Margaret's Church,
followed by Tea and Coffee

THURSDAY

10.00 am. Holy Eucharist at St. Catwg's Church

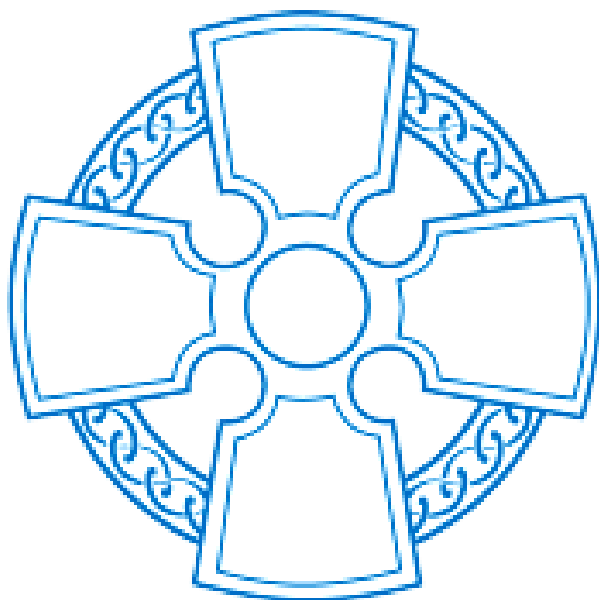
General Disclaimer

The appearance of comments, articles, advertisements, hyperlinks, or statements made within our District magazine do not necessarily represent the views of the District of Gelligaer Wardens and Council. While we aim to include accurate and up-to-date information at the time of publication, we make no warranties or representations as to the accuracy. We therefore assume no liability or responsibility for any error or omission in the content.

*This Publication was produced and printed by the Taff Rhymney Ministry Area,
District of Gelligaer. 2024*



ARDAL WEINIDOGAETH
TÂF RHYMNI
TAFF RHYMNEY
MINISTRY AREA



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