From Syria to South Wales – Diocese welcomes refugees

A message of welcome has been sent out to refugees by the Llandaff Diocese as people throughout Wales are invited to join in a national day of prayer.

As part of its response to the current crisis, the diocese has been able to offer much needed accommodation to one family who fled from war-torn Syria.

In a eulogy, the Archbishop of Wales, Dr Barry Morgan said that it is our Christian duty to help as refugees have no choices left.

“The refugee crisis is a crisis for all of us because in the end we are all part of one worldwide human family. In a family when one member suffers we all suffer and the least we can do is offer whatever help we can,” said the Archbishop.

That is especially true for Christians because Jesus and his family once had to flee for their lives to avoid persecution and death. Refugees are no different and face new challenges.

The Revd Ben Andrews, Rector of St Mary’s Church, Barry said, “A steering group has been set up which is gathering information on what can be provided in the area and what systems can be put in place ready for the arrival of refugees. This includes the compilation of a list of landords which will be passed onto the relevant organisations.

A national day of prayer is being held to offer people a chance to remember those in desperate need and who are facing increasingly difficult conditions. Churches are encouraged to mark the day in any way they can, such as holding 24-hour prayer vigils, putting on special services or simply opening up for people to light candles and say prayers for refugees.

People are also invited to join an open event in the centre of Cardiff led by Cytun – Churches Together in Wales on this day – Thursday, December 10, which is Human Rights Day. It will take place outside Tabernacle Church in The Hayes at 4pm.

The Governing Body of the Church in Wales passed an emergency motion at its last meeting for churches to show solidarity with refugees and those fleeing conflict and to welcome them into their communities. Incomming refugees are likely to be housed via local authorities in the first instance but any parishes who think they may have vacant property which may be suitable for refugees are advised to first contact the property department of the Church in Wales, so that the information can be collated and coordinated.

Tony Davies, chairman of the diocesan Parsonage Board, that is responsible for housing the clergy said that for a variety of reasons they often had a small number of properties that were not occupied by a cleric and rented out.

“The period that these properties are available for rent varies but when approached we were able to offer one which was available for long enough to make it viable to be offered to a refugee family,” said Mr Davies.

A contribution towards the cost of the house provided for rent is being met by the Archbishop.

Llandaff diocesan secretary Rowena Small said, “This family, like so many others, has been through a terrible ordeal. We are just glad that Llandaff was in a position to be one of the first dioceses to support the UK-wide call to make church properties available to refugees.”

The Church in Wales’ Property Committee advises that occupation of property is subject to extensive legal provisions which is why it is essential that they be contacted first before any church property is offered.

“Financial arrangements for occupation will be considered on a case-by-case basis but the committee is clear that helping people in this kind of need is a fundamental Christian duty and thus, is part of the mission and ministry of the Church,” it says.

“Parishes should be encouraged to think about financial giving to relevant appeals and agencies as well as how they will support refugees within their parish life more generally.”

Positive choice about organ donation is urged

Welsh bishops are urging people to make a positive choice about organ donation following a change in the law.

They are encouraging people to respond to the need for more organs by signing the organ donor register, removing any doubt about their wishes in the event of their death.

Organ donation, they stress, is a “wonderful example of what it can mean to love our neighbours”.

On December 1, Wales became the first country in the UK to introduce a soft opt-out system. Under the new system, everyone will be considered a potential organ donor unless they opt out by registering their decision not to be.

The Church in Wales is a supporter of the fleshandblood campaign which encourages churches to see blood and organ donation as part of their giving.

In their statement the bishops said: “Whatever your views about the principles of Act, the fact remains that there is a great shortage of organs for transplant. 220 people are currently on the waiting list in Wales – and one donor can save several lives. In 2014-15, 73 deceased donors supported 173 life-saving operations; but sadly, 12 people died whilst waiting for a transplant.

“As bishops we are wholeheartedly in favour of organ donation. It is love in action and a wonderful example of what it can mean to love our neighbours, especially those in need. Such generosity is a response to God’s generosity towards us.

“We urge and encourage you to sign the Organ Donor Register, and tell your families, so that there can be no doubt about your wishes in the event of your death.”
Ministry Areas: parishes are embracing the vision - Archbishop

Ministry areas may not be optional but there is no ‘one size fits all’, members of the Llandaff Diocesan Conference were told.

During his annual presidential address, Archbishop Barry said he was raising the question of what Ministry Areas could be formed during his ongoing series of deanery visits throughout the diocese.

“I take the view that although I, as bishop, can tell you that ministry areas are not optional, the form they take has to depend a great deal on local input and knowledge.

“That means different answers in different places and a certain undetermined structure that is because each part of the diocese is different from other parts. There is no one size fits all.”

He said that Ministry Areas were already in existence in Llandaff – although they had different names.

“There are Rectorial parishes which reflect the concept of what a ministry area is, that is a number of clerics and lay people working together and pooling their talents for the good of the mission of the church in that particular area – an end if you like to a lone ranger approach to ministry,” said the Archbishop.

He told members:

• Cowbridge will have two more small parishes added to the benefice;
• Eglwysilan now forms part of the new Rectorial parish ministry area of Caerphilly;
• Four separate parishes will form one parish in the centre of Pontypidd;
• The two parishes in Penarth will work together eventually to form a new ministry area;
• The three parishes in Barry are collaborating closely in all kinds of ways;
• Rhondda has zoned itself into four ministry areas;
• The whole deanery of Neath has decided it wants to be a ministry area in its own right and the Church Army is setting up a mission centre to make that possible;
• Pontypridd in this diocese and Rhydymney in the diocese of Monmouth will form a ministry area.

“So things are on the move and what has been fantastic about all this is how the parishes concerned have got excited about the prospect, embraced the vision and seen for themselves the advantages that accrue. That is much better than a centrally imposed plan that people do not own.”

In a wide ranging address which covered topics ranging from the refugee crisis and poverty to same-sex relationships, the Archbishop raised the question of the Archiepiscopal See.

“I know it is a difficult subject but it will not go away. I will not be affected but I am concerned for whoever succeeds me, as have four previous archbishops been concerned.

“At a Diocesan Conference some years ago you said you believed the Archbishop should be located in Cardiff but you were not in favour of having that person also as Diocesan Bishop of Llandaff with an assistant to whom most of the work would be delegated.”

Archbishop Barry told members that he had put forward a different model and had tried to deal in depth with the issue – with the details being available on the website.

“All I ask is that when the Provincial Standing Committee asks us whether we want to look again at this matter, our own Standing Committee will be open to that request. Let me be clear what I am asking – open to having a provincial group to again look at the issue without in any way tying their hands to any particular model.”

To read the full version of Archbishop Barry’s presidential address and for more news from conference visit http://llandaff.churchinwales.org.uk/dio-int/diocesan-conference/

Thanks for the memories
Professionals offer a listening ear

Simon Chalmers is a dementia advisor at the Memory Assessment Service at the Royal Glamorgan Hospital. He says the support group bridges the much needed gap between diagnosis and secondary services such as social services.

“There are only a few groups like this throughout Wales as it is difficult to get them set up. This group is brilliant as it gives the carers support in a safe environment – there is peer support so they can talk to others who are going through the same thing as themselves and there are also professionals here like myself who are available to offer professional advice.”

Sian Hall, who works with Simon as a support worker at the Memory Assessment Service, said the group made everyone who attended feel very safe.

“People often once someone is diagnosed they lose confidence and they stop taking part in the traditional activities that they might have always enjoyed. It may be something as simple as not going to the local cafe anymore or dropping out of the social groups that they were once attended regularly,” said Sian.

“Whatsoever activity it was that they used to take part in, they may now find it embarrassing because of a lack of confidence. But coming here is easy as everyone is in the same boat – they can come here and be themselves and not have to explain anything.

“For a lot of people that we see it’s the small things that make a massive difference to their lives. For the carers they really appreciate the peer support that they get here – they are wives and husbands but their role has been changed to carer. This is a huge change for them and it makes them feel vulnerable and it can affect their confidence as well – the husband that they once relied on now relies on them so it is a massive reversal in roles.”

Wendy Evans, chaplain of Care for the Elderly at Royal Glamorgan Hospital, explained how many people went through a host of emotions after their partner was diagnosed and how they used the group as a place to vent.

“Many people feel guilty about how they are reacting to their partner as they just want their partner to be the person that they have always been,” said Wendy.

“Carers come here and off load – they talk to us about issues that they are facing. Quite often they do not want to bother other family members as they do not want to pass the burden of worry on to them so they come here and off load to us and other helpers.

“Before their partner was diagnosed all these people had a social life but that was taken away from them with the diagnosis – this group helps to give them back a social life.”
Remembering together: support for dementia sufferers and carers

When Vicar Viv Parkinson reopened his refurbished church hall just over a year ago, he was adamant that it had to be used as much as possible by the community.

But he had no idea that within a few months the revamped hall would prove to be such a lifeline as a meeting place for a new support group set up for dementia sufferers and their carers.

Viv had originally set up the hall in the centre of Llantrissant with its modern new kitchen and new toilets to be used by the people in the local area that had helped to raise the £150,000 needed for the makeover.

Now in addition to regular use by a range of community groups such as Brownies and various craft groups, the hall is home to a fortnightly meeting of the Llantrissant Parish Support Group – a new group set up nine months ago for those living with dementia and their carers.

“It is the best thing that I have ever done in my ministry,” said Viv, who has been a priest for twenty years.

This group is as much for the carers as those living with these conditions. Everyone loves coming here and it is a really happy group. When people arrive they might be a bit down in the dumps but they will chat to others who understand what they are going through and by the time they leave, they are boosted right back up,” said Viv.

“The church is always open so they might take half an hour out to go and sit in the church by themselves as they know they can leave their partner or family member here in the knowledge that they will be safe and cared for.

“People come from all over the surrounding area and they say it has made such a difference to their lives already. It’s basically a social club with activities that stimulate and it’s as much for the carers as it is for those living with the condition.”

The group runs on the first and third Wednesday of every month from 11am to 2.30pm – offering a range of activities such as puzzles, colouring, crafts and games. Singing sessions are often held and visiting speakers attend to give talks. Hot drinks are available and people are invited to bring a packed lunch.

“In addition to voluntary support from parishioners who attend, professionals from the Memory Clinic at the Royal Glamorgan Hospital and the chaplain for the elderly also attend the sessions to give advice and information.

People can pop in for half an hour or stay for the whole session – they can come alone or they can bring the person whom they care for along with them. Since opening it has gone from strength to strength with up to 35 people now attending its fortnightly meetings.

“We get referrals from the Memory Team at the local hospital and from within the parish,” said Viv.

“Some carers come by themselves and some come with their partners who are all at different stages of dementia. There is always at least one professional on hand and quite a few of the helpers from the parish have family or friends living with dementia.”

“What we are doing here could easily be replicated in other parishes – support for people living with dementia is so scarce and I think in the future that there may be more reliance on groups like ours.”

“Coming here is a real tonic”

Sue Owen, 67, from Talbot Green, who suffers from Alzheimer’s, said the support group twice a month.

She said, “This group is great as it offers me the opportunity to get out and socialise with other people. At home I am by myself and even though I like to get out, I do not go out with my other friends now as I find it really hard and I tire very easily.

“People say it has made such a difference to their lives already. It’s basically a social club with activities that stimulate and it’s as much for the carers as it is for those living with the condition.”

This group makes a huge difference to my life as it gives me something to look forward to. I meet up with my friends, do some activities, have a chat and generally have some fun.”

Maria Warhurst who attends the group with her husband said, “This group gives us a break as we meet up with other people who are going through the same thing – I can chat to other wives who are also caring for their husbands.

Coming here is a real tonic – it really gives us a boost.

“It gives us a great opportunity to get out of the house. Our husbands are here but sometimes they might sit on another table so we can see them and know they are safe but we are able to have a little break and chat to our friends.

“This group is making such a huge difference to our lives.”

Kath Hext who also attends the group with her husband said that she was not able to go out with her husband that much anymore other than shopping once or twice a week.

“I really look forward to Wednesdays – it’s great to have somewhere to go and some friends to chat to when I get here. This group is marvellous – I wouldn’t be without it now,” said Kath.

Another carer is Wendy Field who attends the group with her mother-in-law Joyce Field, 91.

“Mum lives with us and I am her carer so this group offers us a chance to get out of the house, have a change of scene and meet up with other people.

“Mum loves doing jigsaw puzzles and they have lots here for her to do and even though I sit with her, it gives me a bit of break as I’m able to have a chat with other people at the same time.

“We both enjoy some of the other activities like the crafts and the singing and it’s a really nice outing for us both.”

Joyce said, “I don’t like being on my own so it’s nice to come here and meet everyone – we both enjoy the singing and I like doing the puzzles.”
Three young parishioners from the Benefice of Neath travelled to Cardiff to join other young people from the Diocese at a special ‘Grill the Archbishop’ event. Here 12 year-old Catrin Daniels shares her experience of the day.

“The day started when I met the Revd Wendy Taylor who took myself and the other young adults, Alistair and Imogen, to St Mark’s Church in Gabalfa. When we arrived there was a short coffee break and we had the chance to talk to some other young people and clergy from the diocese.

After a quick chat we all entered a hall. We had an ice breaking starter activity where we played ‘Human Bingo’ - to get us to interact with one another.

Then two ladies read a passage from the Bible. There was also a ‘Thankful Washing Line’ where we posted messages about things we were grateful for – I was thankful for passing my maths and science tests! After we finished the starter activities the Archbishop arrived to begin the grilling.

There were many questions including: Do you think the Welsh language is dying out in religion? What do you think about the new way of donating human organs? etc. All of the Archbishop’s answers were superb.

At the end of grilling we were all treated to a delicious lunch of lasagne, chilli and jacket potatoes. For the desert there was the choice of apple crumble and custard or a chocolate brownie. After lunch we made the journey home in time for the rugby!

It was a great experience to be part of and a wonderful opportunity. It was very interesting to see what the Archbishop thought about these matters.

It must have been difficult to stand up in front of people and have questions fired at you!”

Visitors were able to Sneak a Peek into the workings of the Llandaff Diocese during an open day at Llandaff Cathedral.

The Diocesan Day was staged in October to offer parish officers and parishioners an opportunity to meet diocesan officers and learn more about the help available to them.

Stands were set up and officers were available from various departments and groups ranging from Care of Churches (pictured below) and Communication to the Youth department, Messy Church, Mothers’ Union, Lay Training, the Children’s Committee, Pop up Church, the Board for Social Responsibility, World Mission, Ministry Area Development and the Diocesan Spirituality Group.

Workshops were staged and tours of the Cathedral conducted throughout the day which closed with Evensong with the Cathedral congregation.

The Venerable Peggy Jackson, Archdeacon of Llandaff said, “This day was staged for people in the parishes to meet the diocesan officers and find out about all the support and resources available to them. People in the parishes carry out a tremendous amount of work and we want to thank them for that and show them what support is available to them.”
‘A Day in the Life of....’

Tricia Griffiths, chair of the Friends of St Augustine’s Church, Penarth

Three years ago Tricia was one of a small group of parishioners and others who felt that St Augustine’s Church – Penarth’s only Grade 1 listed building – needed some additional support to help maintain it. It was feared that the iconic building – an example of the Gothic revival architect William Butterfield, that stands proudly above the town, acting as a sealmark, might fall into disrepair without extra help.

So the Friends of St Augustine’s was launched with the first major project being the renovation of the church’s Roll of Honour in time for the commencement of World War One in 2014. Since then there have been talks, concerts, a conference, a horticultural show and now a major renovation of the churchyard is planned. Tricia is a daughter, granddaughter and great niece of clergyman, and also the wife of one. She was brought up in an environment where involvement with the church in one way or another was second nature.

Working with the Friends, and particularly the committee, has been different but rewarding as the organisation has grown steadily and become known. “We have raised modest sums of money but almost equally important at this stage is making contact with people who have never been inside St Augustine’s which exists for the whole community – whether for worship, events or for its sense of peace,” said Tricia.

“We open the church more regularly and have visitors from across the world – all of whom are amazed by the stunning interior,” she added.

5am Wake to hear the shipping forecast in one ear. After the early news and Prayer for the Day, I listen to Farming Today. Take stock of the day ahead I leave behind my sleeping husband Richard and go downstairs for the first cup of tea. Then it’s onto the ‘kitchen survey’ – this is my time of peace when I sort the washing, make lists (a lifetime habit, even though much time is wasted looking for them) and write letters. Cannot remember when the piano tuner is coming – today or Friday? No matter, he said before lunch and that should mean he will be gone before the Mothers Union committee arrive.

8.30am I’m now dressed and our rescue dog Lucy never fails to remind me that her breakfast is something I cooked on Monday. Now for one of my naps (which top up my sleep after waking early), the crossword (simple) and a phone call to a friend. These are my stolen moments.

7.30pm Sit down at the computer to write the Croseo article for Alison.

9.30pm Take a call from a friend and article nearly finished but decide to call it night and read a little before bed. Make a note to myself to email people tomorrow about the visit to Ebenezer Chapel in Pontypool.

8.00pm Sometimes I wonder why I am involved with the Friends – are buildings more important than people? I believe they are inextricably intermingled and if we lose our historic buildings – particularly our churches – we also lose that vital connection with the past which gives us hope and courage for the future. Short chat with Richard – we never end the day without that – he is endlessly supportive. Then a quiet time to reflect, to thank God for a good day, my life, family and friends, and I drift off, radio on hand for tomorrow’s shipping forecast.

10.00am 8.30am 11.30am 12 noon 4.30pm 8.00pm 10.00am 10.00am 11.30am 8.30am
A church which has transformed its hall to tackle poverty and deprivation in its community has been praised by the Archbishop of Wales.

In just eight months, 25 people have volunteered to help run an array of projects at St Gwladys Church Hall in Bargoed and four have gone onto paid work. The hall is now open every day with activities ranging from toddler groups and a cafe with soft play to a night shelter for homeless people, a debt centre and even a school uniform bank.

Thanks to a grant of £227,000 from the Big Lottery Fund last year, the church has been able to take on three paid staff, based in a refurbished office in the hall, to coordinate and support its projects.

The Archbishop, Dr Barry Morgan, had a tour of the hall and met staff and volunteers on a visit to the area. He was shown around and introduced by the priest-in-charge, the Revd Jonathan Widdeess who has overseen the hall’s development since his arrival there two-and-a-half years ago.

Mr Widdeess said the church’s vision was to fight poverty and it was doing it in three ways. He said, “Firstly, we have opened up our church hall, redeveloped it and then raised funding to employ staff. That has enabled us to run groups and activities for the community, working in partnership with local agencies, such as Communities First, Mind and Parent Network.

“Secondly, we have set up a volunteering project and employed a support worker to recruit, induct, train and deploy volunteers to the various groups, making sure they get the opportunity to do the sort of things they want to do. That is proving very successful – it is giving people greater confidence, opportunities to serve and the ability to make a difference to their own neighbours while also improving their expectations, and employment outlook.

“Thirdly, we are targeting poverty directly as a church by coordinating a debt centre, a school uniform bank and, over the winter months now, a night shelter. These are ways of neighbours helping neighbours but coordinated by the local church.”

The Archbishop said, “It is marvellous to see the church engaging with the local community in so many ways. It offers debt advice, has parent and toddler groups, a night shelter so people who have nowhere to sleep between October and March can come here, be given a meal, breakfast and a packed lunch. So the church is doing what the church ought to be doing – meeting community needs and really showing that it cares for the whole person, for their physical needs as well as their spiritual needs.

“Christ met people at the point of their greatest needs – he very rarely engaged people in synagogues and temples. He responded to their needs, just as the church here is responding to the needs of this rather deprived community.

“There are churches all over Wales doing similar work, responding to the needs of their communities in tens of different ways. There is no one size fits all but what is important is that the church is not separate to the community but is part of the community and here to serve it.”

Volunteer Emma Mazey and her son McCaulie

Volunteer Emma Mazey and her son McCaulie
“We are targeting poverty directly as a church by coordinating a debt centre, a school uniform bank and, over the winter months now, a night shelter”

scheme. Since she started in February she has recruited 25 volunteers, four of whom have gone onto full-time work.

Amy says, “We are very lucky to have such a variety of people volunteering – some are looking to get back into work, some have mental health issues and some are just looking for something to do with their time. Most of them hear about the scheme through word of mouth although we also advertise through the job centre and GAVO (Gwent Assosciation of Voluntary Organisations). We find out what they want to do then tailor the job for them so that they get the experience they need and are using their skills. We have seen people gain confidence and volunteer for more and more. They love coming here, which for me, is brilliant!”

Emma Mazey is one of the volunteers. She runs the playgroup for toddlers every Wednesday from 1.30-3pm while her nine-year-old son McCaulie is in school nearby. Emma says, “We often have 19 children here at a time so it can get quite hectic! But the parents stay to chat and help out and I love it – it is really rewarding. I got involved through a friend of mine and it is ideal for me as it means I can do a job while bringing up my son.

“I’ve run an under-10s club before and so this adds to that experience. I think if you volunteer you get noticed and it could lead to a paid job. As a volunteer I’ve also received training from the Workers’ Educational Association – I’ve done courses on First Aid, Health and Safety, Food Hygiene and Manual Handling. So that has given me more skills to offer.”

Mr Widdess adds, “The volunteering scheme has been the eye opener for me. Too often we think of volunteers as being a hard thing to find, but there are benefits to volunteering and in a community like this it is a very productive thing to do. People can gain skills and confidence which can help them back into work. That’s without thinking of the difference they can make to other people’s lives – if you put the two together that is a powerful combination.

“It’s also a way of breaking down barriers between ‘church’ and ‘not church’, ‘Christian’ and not. It is changing the way the church is seen in the locality – it is good news, here for everyone and people are talking about it in positive terms and are coming along.”

Robert Fenton, 25, has been going to St Gwladys’ Church all his life and is now on the books as a volunteer to do odd jobs. He says, “It’s great as we now have volunteers from inside and outside the church which has allowed two communities to mash up in a really positive way. I got involved as I know the church very well – I know where everything is.

“I’m a part-time carer for my Mum and enjoy getting out in my spare time to help out by doing odd jobs. I try and come every Friday and help with admin – there are lots of posters to make! – and generally help run events.”

DEBT CENTRE

Helping people out of debt is another key aim of the church so it has linked up with the Christians Against Poverty organisation to set up a debt centre. It is run by parishioner Beth Jones who gave up her job as a pharmacy technician to do it. She says, “I am employed by CAP and anyone seeking help has to self-refer to CAP in the first instance and then I visit them in their homes and go through their expenditure with them to help them see how they can save money.

“It’s a job I am absolutely passionate about and it’s a very practical way of helping people who are in great need. More and more people are struggling to pay their bills and being in debt is not something we like to own up to. Sometimes I pray with people or talk to them about faith and that gives me the biggest blessing from the job.”

Staff and volunteers with the Archbishop

The Revd Jonathan Widdess

Beth Jones, Debt Centre Manager, CAP
Getting away from it all...

Caravan inside and out

Extra little touches are provided, such as princess/butterfly/dinosaur/football duvet covers and a generous ‘Welcome Pack’ for each new family so they can enjoy a much-needed drink, sandwich and chocolate treat on their arrival. The caravan has a television, DVD player, games, and toys for indoor and outdoor play, picnic table and chairs. A teddy bear and activity bag (all knitted and made by our members) with colouring books and pencils are left for each child to enjoy and take home at the end of the holiday. The caravan is sited in an excellent, quiet location, close to the beach. The owners of the Park generously provide our families with entertainment passes which enable them to use all the facilities.

The generosity of our members does not stop at providing money, many giving of their time each Saturday. In the short time available between the handover of guests, even though we employ a site cleaner, there is a rota of members who travel from every single branch to ensure the cleanliness of the caravan. We, as members of every branch, are delighted to be involved in this special project.

Members Marjory Williams and Jessie Jones (Tongwynlais/Taffs Well branch) at an open day

To provide all this you have to have very special people involved and that is what we have in Josie Bolton our caravan co-ordinator, members of the action and outreach unit and every single member of Mothers’ Union in the Llandaff Diocese who are all committed to what we do for families.

However, for this to continue we have to maintain our membership so if you are not yet a member of this wonderful worldwide organisation why not consider doing so and help us to continue this and many other projects around the Diocese? Next year it will be 140 years since our founder Mary Sumner began the Mothers’ Union let us remember the beginning of her Personal Prayer– ‘All this day, O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee’.

This is the time of year when many of us start to plan our summer holidays for next year but for some families that is not always possible. This special report by Lynne Davies, vice president / action and outreach co-ordinator of Llandaff Diocese Mothers’ Union, explains what is on offer for those who would otherwise not enjoy a summer break.

“Mothers’ Union believes in the importance of family life and in quality time spent together. Away from it all (AFA) is a Mothers’ Union holiday scheme to help people who are experiencing stress in their family life.

The holidays take many different forms and are purchased, funded and maintained by the generous fundraising donations of every branch in the diocese and the day and end of the holiday. The caravan is sited in an excellent, quiet location, close to the beach. The owners of the Park generously provide our families with entertainment passes which enable them to use all the facilities.

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Members pick up the used laundry to take away to wash, they remake the beds with fresh bedding, set out clean tea towels, hand towel and toilet rolls, top up the washing-up liquid and kitchen roll and set out the Welcome Pack, teddies on beds and wet weather activity bags.

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Members pick up the used laundry to take away to wash, they remake the beds with fresh bedding, set out clean tea towels, hand towel and toilet rolls, top up the washing-up liquid and kitchen roll and set out the Welcome Pack, teddies on beds and wet weather activity bags.

To provide all this you have to have very special people involved and that is what we have in Josie Bolton our caravan co-ordinator, members of the action and outreach unit and every single member of Mothers’ Union in the Llandaff Diocese who are all committed to what we do for families.

However, for this to continue we have to maintain our membership so if you are not yet a member of this wonderful worldwide organisation why not consider doing so and help us to continue this and many other projects around the Diocese? Next year it will be 140 years since our founder Mary Sumner began the Mothers’ Union let us remember the beginning of her Personal Prayer– ‘All this day, O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee’.
A 90-year-old tortoise called Joe was among the animals blessed at pet services held throughout the diocese to celebrate the Feast of St Francis.

The tortoise joined around fifty other pets and their owners who attended the special service at St Augustine’s Church, Penarth.

Most of the pets taken to St Augustine’s were dogs, including a large contingent of stray dogs from Cardiff Dogs Home, which were accompanied by the volunteers who look after them.

The oldest pet present was Joe the tortoise - whose owner had inherited him from her great aunt some years ago.

The service was taken by the Revd Andrew James of Dinas Powys (pictured right), whose own dog Coco accompanies him to many of his services.

At the end of the short service, at which the readings, prayers and hymns were specially chosen to reflect upon the relationship between pets and the people who look after them, was the blessing of the animals.

“This was a most exciting and joyful service. We hope the church will put on another one next year,” said one of the volunteers from the dogs home.

The Feast of St Francis of Assisi was also celebrated at St Andrews Church, Caerphilly, where animals ranging from dogs and cats to rabbits, guinea pigs and hamsters attended the pet service.

Following the service inside, the pets and their owners moved outside into the gardens where animals were blessed by the Revd Sue Pratt and the Revd Mark Greenaway-Robbins.

‘When I was thirsty you gave me something to drink’ Matt: 25. 35

On a bright and chilly Sunday morning parishioners from St Martin’s were able to give hospitality, sustenance and encouragement to more than 1,000 people directly outside the church on Albany Road.

Among the 22,000 participants in the Cardiff Half Marathon that passed by was their own Stuart Ingram, who like so many was running in support of his own designated charity.

Stuart was sponsored to raise funds to build new parish rooms at St Martin in Roath. These will become a place of further hospitality and welcome for the wider community. Together with those who took part in the Cardiff Family Fun Run the day before, a total of £1,000 was raised.

“Many of the runners arriving at St Martin’s on Albany Road had passed the three quarter line on the 22K route. Many were thirsty and in need of encouragement. We were able to provide both. Water that was so graciously received and welcomed,” said Father Irving Hamer of St Martin’s.

“Without asking any questions, worrying about who this thirsty person might be, what they did or where they came from we simply gave sustenance. In this I saw a living icon of the Church ministering to a thirsty and tired world as it runs the marathon of life.

“It is amazing the many ways we can live out the precepts and values of the Kingdom.”

Among the runners that passed by was Josh Baker from Pencoed who Father Hamer baptised in Porthcawl 25 years ago and former Welsh rugby captain Aflie – Gareth Thomas, who stopped for water.

Animals come out of their shells for service

Musicathon hits the right note

Musicians from the parish of Colyty, Nolton and Brackla were so inspired by the wonderful work being done in Ely through the Making Music, Changing Lives (MMCL) that they organised a 12-hour sponsored Musicathon to raise funds for the organisation.

The parish has a number of music ensembles and it was the Recorder Group who came up with the idea to invite people from across the parish to make live music in St Mary’s, Nolton, for a period of thirty minutes each. By organising twenty four such periods they would commit to creating live music for a non-stop twelve hours.

The Rector, Canon Mike Komor said, “To our surprise and delight enthusiasm for the Musicathon was strong, and in a short space of time we had a list of individuals and groups who were eager to be involved.

“And so our first group set up and began playing at 8am. Through the day we had our two church choirs, hand bell ringers, the Recorder Group, our parish organists and invited guests, a Boomwhacker session (look it up on the Internet!), and various soloists or small ensembles, comprising people from age eighteen to eighty-plus, all offering their performances.

“The church was open through the day, and members of the public and our congregations were encouraged to come and listen, and then make a donation if they weren’t already sponsoring someone.

“The day concluded with a session by the jazz group Hot Shoes, and finally some community singing of songs from the shows.”

Once all the money was collected, Canon Komor went along with some members of the parish to the Church of the Resurrection in Ely to attend a concert given by MMCL and present a cheque for £1,400 to the Revd Jan Gould (pictured above).

“All of us at MMCL were thrilled to hear of the musical adventures that took place in the parishes of Colty, Nolton, Brackla and Cych, and deeply touched that they were having all this fun in order to raise funds to support our musical work in Ely. The amount raised was incredible and we are very grateful,” said Revd Gould.

Little rays of hope

Pupils of All Saints Primary School dressed in the colours of the rainbow as they celebrated their Values Day.

During the day, pupils reflected on how they could bring Hope to others and what actions they could take to help make God’s world a better place. They captured their thoughts through a variety of activities. They created posters, hope spirals and used Lego to build models of Hope.

Pupils discussed how God created a rainbow as a promise to his people that He would never again destroy life on Earth with a great flood. During the morning the whole school helped create a rainbow to symbolise Hope.

International links at Llandaff City

A Cardiff school has established an international partnership with a school in Zambia thanks to funding from the British Council, through the Connecting Classrooms programme.

Llandaff City Church in Wales Primary School has hosted staff from Mugurameno Primary on three occasions in recent years and also sent teaching staff to Zambia three times – the latest being in July this year.

During the latest visit Sarah-Jane Maples and Ruth Harding spent a week teaching, observing lessons, carrying out collaborative project work and soaking up cultural experiences at Mugurameno Primary.

“The value of the experiences as professional teachers was vast and has had great impact on the children and teachers of both schools throughout the last three years of reciprocal visits,” said Mrs Maples.

Harvest Eucharist celebrated in Welsh

Harvest Sunday (October 4th) saw Archbishop Barry celebrate the Eucharist in Welsh at the Parish Church of St Thomas in Neath.

The monthly Welsh language service is well attended, and it is the only Welsh Eucharist in the Area Deanery of Neath.

Marcus Joseph assisted the Archbishop at the altar, and 17 year-old Alistair O’Mahoney read the lesson.
COMINGS AND GOINGS

‘Golden Pilgrim’ retires

Canon Graham Francis, the oldest and longest serving stipendiary cleric in the Church in Wales retires on January 30th.

Five years ago, whilst on pilgrimage to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, a few intrepid pilgrims took a detour from the village winding their way through the larches of Norfolk country to collect a pre-ordered celebration cake, across which were iced the words: “Congratulations Fr Graham, a Golden Pilgrim.”

It was fifty years earlier, at the age of 14, that Graham Francis made his first pilgrimage to the shrine and since then he has made at least one pilgrimage a year. That golden year was an important milestone for Graham and an event which hundreds of fellow pilgrims were eager to celebrate.

From 1978 until the late 1990s, Graham milestoned with his 70th birthday, In October 2015 he celebrated another milestone with his 70th birthday, and whenever I receive Roman Catholic priest, firstly in Europe."

In 1987 Graham was invested as a Clerk of the Order of Our Lady of Walsingham in recognition of his work for the shrine’s ministry and mission. The Shrine has been and continues to be an important part of Graham’s devotion and ministry. However, as well as having his heart set on a place 250 miles away, Graham is well known and loved for his ministry here at home in the Diocese of Llandaff where he has served the whole of his stipendiary ministry.

Born in Neath in 1945 and brought up in Port Talbot, he trained for ordination at St Michael’s College, Llandaff. Ordained deacon in 1970 and priest in 1971, he served his curacy in the Parish of Cowbridge. It was while he was there that he married Eleri and his son Illtyd and daughter Catri were born. They have been a great support to him throughout his ministry. In 1976 he became Vicar of Penrhwiwer in the Cynon Valley serving there for 26 years until in 2002, he became Vicar of Cardiff St Mary with S Dyfrig and S Samson. Three years later he became Vicar of Grangetown. During his time in his present parish he has been honorary chaplain to the Port of Cardiff, the Cardiff branch of the Mission to Seafarers and the Cardiff branch of the Merchant Navy Association. He has also been chair of the governing body of St Mary the Virgin Primary School and a trustee of the Huggard charity.

He was an elected member of the Governing Body of the Church in Wales from 1978 to 2012, and has been a member of the Church in Wales License to Consecrate since 1998. Since 1999 he has been Diocesan Advisor for the Ministry of Deliverance and from 2003 a member of the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches. In 2002 he was appointed a Canon of the Cathedral Chapter. In October 2015 he celebrated another milestone with his 70th birthday, characteristically accompanied by a church full of friends and family for a Thanksgiving Mass.

Graham, who is looking forward to spending more time with his family, especially his four grandsons, has always been committed to what he calls his two vocations: one to the ordained ministry and the other to married life.

Together Graham and Eleri will retire just a small journey away across the city to Splott, where we hope they will continue to play an active and lively part in the church with the same dedication and warmth, humour and hospitality we have come to know. As one for whom pilgrimage is such an influential aspect of his life we wish him a literal voyage and many more pilgrimages to follow.

By the Revd Dean Atkins

Canopy and Staves

The new area dean for Llandaff is the Revd Michael Komor who takes over from Canon Stephen Wigley and the new area dean for Pontypridd is Canon Michael Belcher, who took over as Rector from Canon Derek Belcher, who retired in March after 14 years in Cowbridge.

“I think that being a parish priest is the best job in the world. I have felt a deep sense of God’s call in taking up the post of Rector at Cowbridge. There is much to do and the most important thing will be working together and experiencing God’s love within these communities,” said Stephen.

New ministry area for Pontypridd

The Revd David Nyirongo has been licensed as one of the three team vicars for the newly formed ministry area of Pontypridd. David, who was formerly team curate in the West Warrington Team Ministry in the Diocese of Liverpool, has moved to Wales with his wife Safiya and their three young children.

The new parish and ministry area of Pontypridd has been created from the existing four parishes in the Pontypridd town area – including joining the Revd Peter Lewis and the Revd Michael Gable as one of its three team vicars.

David, who has special responsibility for St David’s Church and Christ Church said, “I am so excited to be here in Pontypridd. A ministry area is all about getting to know everyone and getting as many people as possible involved in the life of the church.”

Area Deans

The new area dean for Llandaff is the Revd Michael John who takes over from Canon Stephen Wigley and the new area dean for Pontypridd is Canon Michael Komor who takes over from Canon Edward Evans who has retired.

Leaving

The Revd Andrew Holmes, Vicar of the Benefice of Penrhiewceibwch, Matthewstown and Ysbyty Cwmbran has been appointed Vicar of Manselton and Cwmbran in the Diocese of Swansea and Brecon.

Retiring

Mr Doug Nelm, retired from the Reader Ministry in the Benefice of Eglwys Ilan and Caerphilly on November 11 - the 9th anniversary of his licensing.
In the steps of saints

Candlelit church of St Maethyr

By Alan Jenkins

A group of seven pilgrims from Llandaff journeyed to North Wales to Ynys Enlli (Barsey Island) off the Llyn Peninsula.

We all met up at Aberdaron where we were joined on our first night by Susan Fogarty, the Ministry Area Warden for Bro Enlli. Susan was to lead us on our first session of the pilgrimage taking us through “Stations to the Untainted Cross”, reading poems by R.S.Thomas.

That evening we made our way to St. Maethyr’s Church to find it lit by candlelight. Immediately stepping through the door our breath was taken away by the beauty. Moving from station to station, we ended up by the altar and a large clear window lit with more candles. While we knelt at the altar, Susan read “Kneeling” and then when standing looking out of the window at the moon she read us “The moon in Llyn”.

The next morning after breakfast we made the short journey to Porth Meudwy to board the boat to take us across to the island – landing safely at “Y Cafn” in glorious sunshine. We headed for “Carreg Fawr” where we were told there was an oratory which at one time was used as a hermitage and this was where we held our service. It had been set up as a small chapel with just enough seating for seven people, yet again just right for us. It was a very peaceful place and our service was similar.

Llandaff goes to Taizé

The first week of August was inspirational for a group of 10 pilgrims who made the journey from Cardiff to the famous Franciscan community of Taizé. For many years the Revd Jan Gould has organised a trip for young people to this special place and for some including 21-year-old Rhianon Birdsell from Rhondda Cynon Taf, this was a chance to visit this ecumenical community.

“As young people (aged 16-26) our trip to Taizé was particularly special for several reasons. Firstly we met some wonderful, interesting people. There cannot be many places where you have the chance to make new friendships with people from other countries. In our international Bible study groups we were able to explore different cultures, sharing our lives and faith through love. We had time to consider some important questions from the Bible and reflect on their place in our lives. In the hot weather we bonded over ice cream and crepes, sharing our experiences of faith and how God has touched us.

“Another thing that was memorable about our visit was worshipping with six thousand people in one place. The chance to experience prayer in multiple languages was awe-inspiring. This was heightened by hearing the scripture sung by many in Taizé’s unique music style. The beautiful and enormous church was filled with the beautiful chants that Taizé is so famous for.”

“Thirdly as busy young people, Taizé was valuable time for us to take a break from our everyday lives and find space to listen to God. There was a time of silence in the daily services which helped us to slow down and encounter God. This along with the simplistic style of living here for a week has given us fresh inspiration to try to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. We really enjoyed our trip to Taizé and feel that it is a great place for young people who are open to new experiences.”

The stone altar inside the Abbey Tower

Archdeacon of Meirionnydd, Andrew who gave us a talk on the differences between Faith Tourism and Pilgrimage.

On the final morning we were invited to a Pilgrim’s Eucharist at St. Maethyr’s Church and were joined by a few of the local congregation. This was a fitting end to our pilgrimage as from here we could see Ynys Enlli in the distance.

If you give time to God, He pays you back in wonderful ways.

Walsingham Youth Pilgrimage

Book now for next year

Six young people from the Llandaff Diocese attended the Walsingham Youth Pilgrimage this year – joining hundreds from all over the UK and abroad for a week of worship and fun. Llandaff has been taking a group to this pilgrimage for more than 15 years, with former pilgrims now returning to take on leadership roles.

This year’s Youth Pilgrimage had an ABBA Father theme and was based around the Lord’s Prayer and the pop group ABBA. Joshua Andrews, 14, from Cadogan-Juxta-Berry was among those from Llandaff who camped at Walsingham, Norfolk with many others.

“I really enjoyed it and will definitely go again,” said Joshua.

Activities during the week ranged from bible study, Mass in the Big Top, visiting the Holy House, workshops, receiving holy water in the Shrine, taking part in the Holy Mile Walk to entertainment from an ABBA tribute band, karaoke, BBQ’s and discos.

The youngsters camped with a group from St David’s Diocese and also hosted a group from Sweden.

One former youth pilgrim Rhys Thomas, who is now church warden at St Margaret’s, Aberaman, returned this year as part of the ministry team.

“For me the experiences Walsingham have given me have been incredible, from a young pilgrim (unsure about my faith and religion) to now (I would class myself as a fully functioning member of the Church).

“It helped normalise Church and worship for me. It proved to me that we don’t need a traditional Church to worship God, He is found where His people are gathered.

“I would encourage all young people to experience Walsingham as it proves that we, as young people are not alone in the Church and are united in our faith.”

Kelsey Clarke also a former pilgrim from St Margaret’s was a steward at this year’s pilgrimage.

“2015 was my seventh year going to the youth pilgrimage and each year I love it more and more. As a young person, you sometimes get a little bit bored of the same goings on in church each week. The youth pilgrimage is a great way to show you that you aren’t worshipping alone as a young Christian and it does so in such a way that you’ll feel refreshed in your faith when you’re there and after you’ve left.”

Booking forms and posters for next year are now out, 1st-5th August 2016, £130 for 11-17 year olds. More information from Fr Ben Andrews 01446 406690 fbrendrews@aol.com

croeso Winter 2016 11
Llandaff Diocese is holding its first ever Festival of Prayer Day on Saturday, July 9, 2016 at St Michael’s Theological College and Llandaff Cathedral.

Call all Explorers!

Prayer Day on Saturday, July 9, 2016 at St Michael’s Theological College and Llandaff Cathedral.

Produced by the Department of Communication of the Llandaff Diocesan Council for Mission and Ministry © Llandaff Diocesan Board of Finance

Parish Website Scheme

If you have ever struggled with building a website for your parish or Ministry Area, help is at hand!

The Church in Wales Parish Website Scheme offers you the ability to create your own website and host it free of charge. The websites are built on an easy-to-use content management system that means you don’t have to be a computer whizz to get your parish online and, if you experience problems or just need advice, you can access telephone support between 9am-5pm Monday to Friday.

248 parishes have already taken advantage of the scheme and have been able to develop sites that keep them in touch with their parishioners and showcase the work of the parish.

The sites are capable of hosting full text content and come pre-built with a custom events module so that you advertise forthcoming special occasions and services. Best of all, it is completely free of charge and only takes a few minutes to build a basic website. New tools and functions are being developed all the time and as a parish website user you are free to pick and choose exactly what works best for you and your parishioners.

For more information about the Parish Website Scheme and to register your interest, please visit: http://parish.churchinwales.org.uk/register/

BOOK REVIEW

Fun ways to Fundraise

Hesitant about raising funds for your church or other good cause? Not sure what to do or how to get started?

Help is at hand in the form of a new book - A guide to Fun Ways to Fundraise for your community, church or charity (available from Amazon priced £7.99/Kindle £3.97).

Written by a former journalist, Penny Hallett, the book is packed with 200 plus ideas for activities and events as well as hot tips to guide you through the process and make it fun.

The 176-page guide explains how to:

- set objectives
- choose a venue
- find sponsors
- publicise effectively
- and, importantly, make sure it’s safe and legal

Whether you’re a first-time fundraiser, or an old-hand looking for new ideas, this easy-to-read guide will show you how to boost the coffers of your church, charity or good cause. You might only raise a tenner or maybe you’ll bring in thousands of pounds, but you will also raise awareness of your cause, get to know more people and recruit new supporters.

All royalties are being donated to a £5.5m church and community project by St Michael’s Church, Stoke Gifford, South Gloucestershire.

Caption Competition

Thank you for all your entries to the Caption competition. Remember the picture from the last edition?

It was hard for us to choose a winner from all the great suggestions but first place went to: *“Father Mark preached on forgiveness, ‘Let Zygons be Zygons’*”

The Revd Chris Reaney. Please send in your captions for this photograph to Alison Young, Croeso, Llandaff Diocese, The Court, Cocychurch, Bridgend, CF35 5HF or by email to alisonyoung@churchinwales.org.uk

Tips on increasing giving

In this month’s edition of Croeso we’ve enclosed Funding God’s Mission leaflet 2016.

God’s mission is about transforming people’s lives, transforming communities and transforming the world around us.

Like other organisations, the church needs money to fund God’s work.

Within the leaflet you’ll find information on parish finance and how you can increase giving in your church.

For instance did you know that by using Gift Aid you can increase every eligible donation to your church by 25% (25p on every £1 donated) at no extra cost to either the donor or your church.

There is also information on funds, fundraising and what the church spends money on.

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(WWW.FestivalOFPraise.co.uk or alternatively there is a leaflet inserted within this addition of Croeso. For those not online, or who do not have a leaflet, further information can be found from the Revd Moira Spence on 01656 881960.)