

November 2020

CIRCUIT NEWS

CIRCUIT NEWS AND VIEWS FOR BANGOR & HOLYHEAD METHODIST CIRCUIT

THE MISSION OF THE BANGOR & HOLYHEAD CIRCUIT IS TO LIVE OUT GOD'S WORD AND SHARE THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST BY LOVING AND CARING WHOLEHEARTEDLY THROUGH SERVICE AND WORSHIP WITH FUN, FELLOWSHIP AND JOY FOR ALL THE CHURCH FAMILY AND THE COMMUNITY.

Out and about around the circuit



Prayers for Ukraine in Llanfairfechan

Safeguarding training in Bangor



Easter Gardens and activities in Penmaenmawr



Amlwch and Holyhead Churches preparing for Easter



Holy Week 2022

Letter from the Superintendent

*"I am your life, but if you will not name me,
Seal up your soul with tears, and never blame me."*

Charles Causley, the Cornish poet who died nearly 20 years ago, was inspired by looking at a crucifix to write a poem entitled 'I am the Great Sun.' In it he imagines Jesus speaking directly to us from the cross, begging us not to pass on by. Although Causley himself rarely went to church, Rowan Williams, former Archbishop of Canterbury, believes it is right for us to give serious attention to his poetry. In fact Williams has gone as far as to say this about the final two lines of the poem: "These words should be etched in granite and every priest, every Christian, made to look at them. These words are from one of the most significant religious poems of the twentieth century." So what is it about the poem that should make us sit up and take notice?

In a world where we watch helplessly as Vladimir Putin's brutal attempts to conquer a sovereign European state unfold daily before our eyes, the poem challenges us to ask whether we treat Holy Week as seriously as it deserves: when good and evil are battling it out on the streets, are we really ready to deny ourselves, to lose our lives in order to save them, and to take up our own cross? As Rowan Williams notes in his book 'God With us,' Jesus had grown up in a Galilee that was a hotbed of resistance to the Romans and he would have seen plenty of crosses put up by the roadside on which Jewish freedom-fighters were executed, so that 'when in the gospels Jesus speaks of picking up your cross and following him, he is not using a religious metaphor for things becoming a bit difficult.'

The arrival of Ukrainian refugees in our towns and cities demands that our faith really steps up a gear to deal head on with the brutality of the world as it is. It would be so easy for us to keep all this inhumanity at arm's length. But if we were to do that we would be agreeing with the voice that speaks to us from this poem, accusing us of not really wanting to look God in the eye and acknowledge that there is something in each of us that contributes towards the continuing pain of Christ, who is daily crucified in a myriad of different ways and places across the world.

Williams believes the poem reminds us that we still don't really know how to live, at least not the kind of abundant life that Jesus came to offer us: 'To put it in unhelpful prose, it seems as though the poem is saying: all that actually gives me life, gives me energy and hope, or anchorage in reality, all of that also frightens me so much, that I want to run, and not only run, but want to strike out at what seems to promise what is good for me. We are living in a society which doesn't seem to know where its life or health is, and I think that's one of the reasons I'd like to see the poem engraved in granite in public places.' Fr Anthony Maggs, the Catholic priest who was asked to officiate at Causley's funeral in 2003 agrees: "For someone who has been trying to understand his faith for as long as I have been – umpteen years of study of the scriptures – suddenly there in 14 lines you've got the whole of salvation history encapsulated."

So, this Holy Week, I invite you to read this poem to see if there is any truth in its lines; receive it as a challenge and a spur to your faith, a reminder once again of the God, who in Jesus, reaches out his hands to us, inviting us to follow him on his way of costly love.

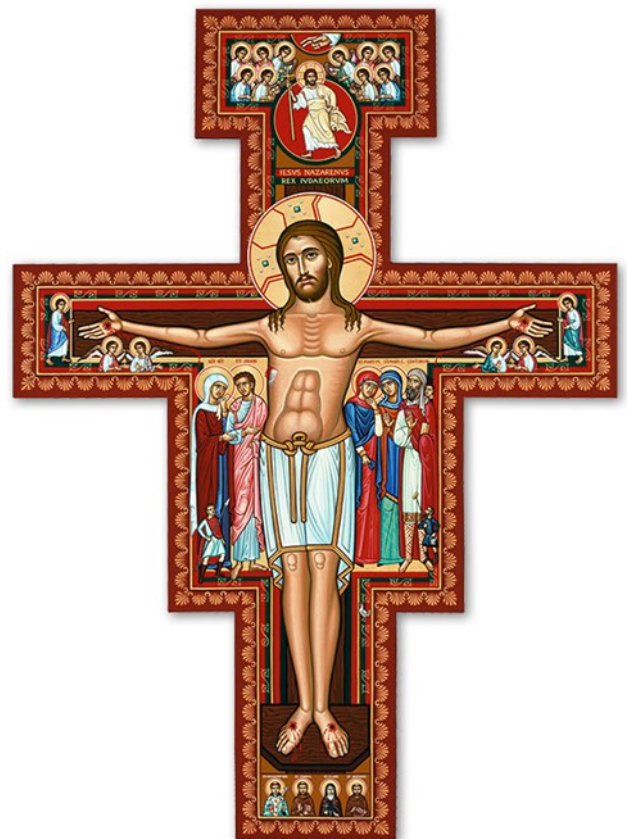
Nick Sissons

CIRCUIT NEWS

'I am the Great Sun' by Charles Causley

(from a Normandy crucifix of 1632)

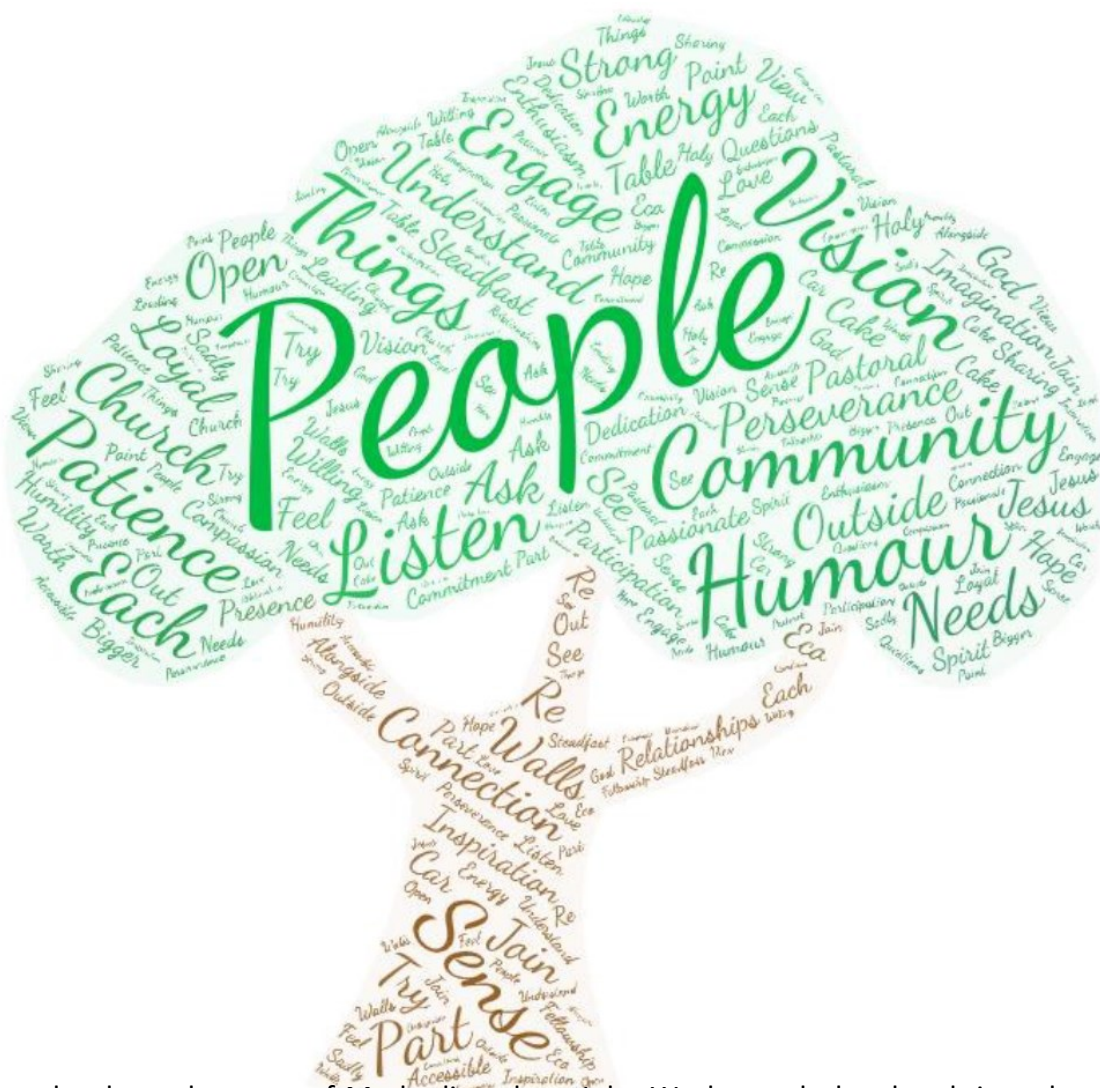
*I am the great sun, but you do not see me,
I am your husband, but you turn away.
I am the captive, but you do not free me,
I am the captain, but you will not obey.
I am the truth, but you will not believe me,
I am the city where you will not stay.
I am your wife, your child, but you will leave me,
I am that God, to whom you will not pray.
I am your counsel, but you will not hear me,
I am your lover, whom you will betray.
I am the victor, but you do not cheer me,
I am the holy dove, whom you will slay.
I am your life, but if you will not name me,*



Rural and Rooted

On 29 March, I joined with many others across the UK for a Webinar on what was billed as **“A conversation of discovery, learning and sharing of what it is to be church in an age in a small rural setting and possibly without buildings.”**

First we were asked to complete the sentence, “To be church in a small rural setting we need.....” Here is what we came up with.....



Then we thought about the roots of Methodism, how John Wesley took the church into the streets when he preached to groups of miners in Bristol, because to Wesley and others, the normal church system was not working. This led to the formation of classes, meeting in people's homes and it was only later that churches went the way of meeting in buildings. Today, according to Andy Fishbourne, we are in a place, perhaps not by choice, when we need to rediscover this past and look to a time of being church in our rural context without buildings. This is something to embrace not fear, because as Wesley found, it can open up new possibilities to reach people in mission. In particular, we can be limited by the buildings and so much of our time can be spent in looking after them, that to be released from them can mean that we have more energy to be and do Church.

Sarah Hulme then led a section outlining the changes going through Conference (The rule of 12 or less). There are clearly going to be challenges for many congregations, but these challenges can also become opportunities if we can answer the question, “How can we creatively find ways to be church?” This applies particularly to those congregations which now or soon, may not have a building. How to still be church?

Some possibilities..... meet in homes or back gardens or other suitable spaces for all ages, for example a café or Village Hall. Think and pray who you could partner with. Go for worship and prayer walks. Keep the groups small on purpose. Make sure there is a missional edge and outward focus. Be ecumenical. Café Church.

Yasmin Finch came up with a top tip on how to move forward as an outward looking church without buildings...**Join up the dots for people by creating steppingstones to church.** She gave an example of a church which had a thriving toddler group, but none of these people came to formal worship on a Sunday, the jump was too big for them. However, this changed when a Monthly Café Service was created, which targeted this group and was billed for people who don't come to church. A church for people who don't come to church, which was more lively, creative and relevant to them. They sat in comfy chairs round tables like you would do in a café; they served pastries and coffee; they broke the service down in to small bitesize pieces (prayers, songs, fun activities, a 5 minute message); there was no “in language” and everything was explained. There was even an area at the back where people could come and read papers if preferred – many partners would come and be part of the group in this way before gradually being drawn into what was going on at whatever level they were comfortable with. Stepping stones.

We then went into small break-out rooms for discussions arising from what we had heard. I was in a group with a man from the Paisley area who described himself as a local Lay Pastor with oversight over 6 small “groups”. He indicated one of these groups had shut its building and joined up with the local URC church; another, was one aimed specifically at younger and active people, which involved worship on the move and outside, which he described as “Forest Church”. He indicated that each of the other groups were specific and targeted at different sorts of people – Café Church, Women's Fellowship, Men's Zone, Youth. In other words age and gender specific but with the occasional coming together activity or event, usually at an extended café-style church event.

Sarah Hulme concluded by suggesting that for many groups the direction to move in is ecumenically and forming partnerships with other groups. For some circuits it might be that some of the churches are best placed to amalgamate with others. She cited the example of West Preston Methodist Church, where 3 churches have amalgamated into one, albeit worshipping on 3 sites. Reference was made to the developing idea of Multi-site Church, where instead of having one dominant church in a circuit, there is just the one church, with one church council per this YouTube link; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ilifd44MO4Q> For others, the way forward may be the idea of “cell church” or some other imaginative way of being church per this youtube link; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INtV6fZLsSo>

Finally, the overarching principle to remember and absorb, is that “a church is a community of people, not a building.”

Question: Could one of these routes be the direction of travel Bangor and Holyhead Circuit should be taking?

John Hay - April 2022



International Students at St John's Bangor

It is always a joy to meet Christian from other parts of the world and at St John's we are particularly fortunate to have several international students, who are in Bangor to study at the University, worshipping with us, some of whom have their families with them. At present there are students from Asia, Africa, North America and the Caribbean as well as from the UK, and after the long disruption from COVID we are beginning to be able to get together in the week for social or devotional meetings and also to meet at the manse for occasional Sunday lunches. In this article one of our students explains what life is like for her being here in Wales.

My name is Kodi Edwards and I'm an international student at Bangor University. I'm from the federation of St. Kitts and Nevis which is a small twin island nation in the Caribbean. I'm currently in my second year pursuing an undergraduate course in Marine Biology. I chose Bangor because I liked what the course had to offer as well as the small town seemed less intimidating to move to on my own. So far, I've thoroughly enjoyed my time here. I first came to St. John's last year at the start of my second year and was most warmly welcomed. I immediately felt as if I had been apart of the congregation for years, as I was invited to take part in gatherings and be apart of the student group. Now, I assist with serving refreshments at the end of service on Sundays. I look forward to attending service every Sunday as I enjoy interacting with everyone. I look forward to the bright smiles and conversations as they all make me feel at home and around family. I also look forward to meeting weekly with the other students as the exchanges we have about our week and our outings where we play games is quite refreshing. I appreciate all of the help and support I've received and the security of knowing people are genuinely concerned about my wellbeing. I hope to become even more involved in the church and its outreach even though I'm aware my final year is fast approaching. I will be sad to leave everyone, but I will cherish the friendships and memories of a wonderful community here at St. Johns.

My Lockdown Project.

Pauline Pratt

It all started back in the early 1960s when the class I was attending in Primary School was working on a wild flower project. My father, not being a flower expert, bought me a Ladybird book on wild flowers. So started my long standing relationship with Ladybird Books. In those days they cost two shillings and sixpence and had their own dust covers!

In 1968 I started teacher training college in Bangor. As it was long before the days of the Internet for each teaching practice I would splash out and buy a new Ladybird book for the topic to be covered. Each gave me ideas and helped to formulate a plan.

Throughout my career, with each new topic, I would purchase a new book.

When my son – Jonathan - was a toddler, I started collecting the Ladybird Key Reading Scheme books in preparation for the time when he learnt to read. From that day to this these books have helped, not only my son, but countless children to develop their reading skills.

During Lockdown, like most other people, I thought much about downsizing and what would happen to my “stuff” after I had gone. I could not bear the thought of these precious books (at least to me) ending up as rubbish on a skip and so I took the decision to email Ladybird Books.

Eventually I was contacted by the chief archivist who requested a list of titles so that any gaps which they had could be filled.

In September I received the list of the titles they required and would like to purchase. I didn't state a price and trusted them to be fair. I stressed the fact that the money was to go to a local charity and that they might get a bit of good freewill publicity.

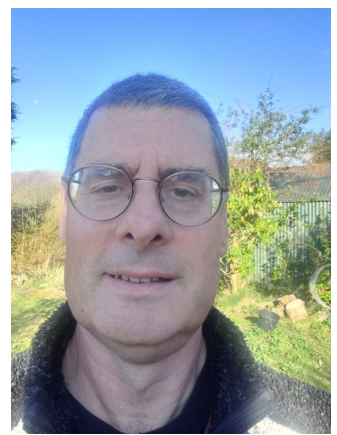
I am delighted with the result. The archivist offered me the grand sum of three pounds per book and to arrange for the collection of the package by a national carrier service. I accepted readily. The next stage is to arrange for the collection of the books and the transfer of the money. The whole project has brought me into contact with some lovely people and inspired me to continue my downsizing. The added bonus will be the ability to present Ty Gobaith (Hope House) with a cheque. Ty Gobaith is the children's hospice situated near The Groes Hotel close to Henryd. I chose this charity because a dear friend of mine had a terminally ill grandchild who received a great deal of love and support from the charity and its staff before his death.

I have received great pleasure through the whole exercise. The moral of the tale is don't sit on your “stuff”. Do something with it before someone else does it for you because what is precious to you might be rubbish to them.

“Getting to Know You” –

Simon Charters, Local Preacher

In this new regular feature for the Circuit Newsletter we give people an opportunity to introduce themselves to the Circuit and say a little bit about their life and Christian experience.



Tell us a little about your family background.

I was born in London but moved to Bristol at 18 months and that's where I spend my "formative years" (I still follow "The Gas"). My father was a railway clerk and my mum made loose covers for Maples and then for a small company that fitted out Gatcombe Park for Princess Anne, amongst others. I went to a direct-grant boarding school (QEH) with a strong Christian ethic and progressive head teacher, that gave me a very sound Christian base for my life (and boy, did I need it!). As a family we were always involved at Horfield Methodist Church; for me this was Sunday School and then the Sunday Youth group on my weekly trips home.

After school what did you do?

After school, I went to Bangor University and studied accountancy, though, much more importantly, here is where I met my wife Shirley, who was studying Education with PE, and where one of the tutors was John Fazey. Almost inevitably we met through MethSoc. From there I went on to train as a CIMA accountant and then, largely by accident, to lead Change and Project Management and discovered skills in process engineering. After Bangor we have lived in Berkshire, Yorkshire and County Durham before returning to Gwynedd. We have 5 children, all grown up and scattered across England but regular visitors to our new home. We have two grand-daughters and two more grand-children on the way. If I've learnt anything from our wanderings it's this: don't worry, God has a plan anyway!

What have been the keen moments on your Christian journey?

It's difficult to point to a specific time. There have been points, such as at a full-immersion baptism service, where I have wanted to take another step (in that case, to confirmation), but I believe my biggest influence has been, throughout my life, God working through his people and their engagement with me: parents who taught and lived Christian values, friends who have influenced through hospitality, group or church leadership, people prepared to challenge me when they see something that maybe I don't, many people who have set an example of grace through their own action and words, something I strive but often fail to emulate.

Do you have a favourite Bible passage or verse?

My favourite passage is Matthew 7 verse 12:

'In everything, do to others as you would have them do to you.'

My faith is an active faith, so it feels right to be well-guided in what I do. I could have chosen the list of Spirit fruits (Galatians 5:22) but no list can ever be exhaustive, so I am happier to be guided by a simple rule and I hope that I can demonstrate the same grace to others as they have shown me, however it may manifest itself.

Do you have a favourite hymn or song?

As a musician I know so many wonderful pieces of music, a few of which I can play! My favourite hymn is probably Stuart Townend's "How deep the Father's love for us", which is both collective and personal, whilst singing it demands personal humility and recognition of God's grace and sacrifice for us.

If you could only say one thing to someone about what is most important in life what would you say?

Listen: listen for the sounds of creation's joy in new life and growth, listen for creation's groaning under its human yoke, listen for the words of wisdom spoken by others – listen, and, above all, listen for God's word.

Anna Chaplaincy – our Circuit story so far...

The Circuit is looking to develop its work with older people and to that end at the start of this calendar year three of our Circuit members (Jan Brightman, Anne Jackson and Ellie Jones) volunteered to go on a six-week course, which the Circuit funded, run by the Bible Reading Fellowship about their ministry entitled Anna Chaplaincy. They have already reported back to the Circuit Meeting and here they each give us a flavour of what they found particularly helpful about the course, some of what they have learnt and how the Circuit might develop this work. If you think you would like to be involved in this work or want to know more please contact Nick Sissons.

Ellie Jones writes:

As our medical care, diet etc., continue to improve, so our life expectancy continues to increase. The numbers of people who survive into the third and fourth ages has increased vastly in the last century. In our own congregations, we have seen in the last fifty years, the shedding of our young people and the increasing age of members. The problem of providing spiritual care for those no longer able to come to church has become very real. Physical access to church premises has been improved, but there are increasing numbers of people too frail to come to church. This applies to other denominations as well of course and to people of other faiths and none..

The challenge is to supply spiritual care to older people in their homes, care homes, nursing homes etc. Spiritual care in its broadest sense including providing opportunities for expressing the need to give and receive love, the need for hope, the need for something to believe in, for creativity, for connection to other people. It is not about getting people into the church, increasing membership etc, but taking spiritual care to people where they are.

Anne Jackson writes:

Anna Chaplaincy is a ministry that comes from within the Christian church to serve older people of all faiths and none outside in the community. Those who provide this ministry (who are called Anna chaplains and Anna Friends) must be mature Christians and worshipping members of a fellowship and they work under the direction of a senior Church Leader. In some areas they may operate ecumenically, providing a service for a whole town or village; in other places it might only be doing one thing, such as running a Dementia Café or leading a regular service in a care home. Importantly it always involves “walking alongside” the elderly, especially those in their declining years, and their carers. Good listening skills and a commitment to developing personal relationships are vital in this work.

The elderly often welcome an opportunity to talk about their faith. It enables them to express both certainty and doubt especially as they approach death. Those with no faith also welcome an opportunity to talk about things and experiences that have special meaning for them. Older people, who are given time to reminisce, can ask profound questions like “Who am I?” and “What really matters to me?” As they approach death they may have questions they want answering or regrets which they need help to deal

Jan Brightman writes:

“The Lord watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow..”

Since I was widowed almost ten years ago I have thought so many times of God’s promise to widows and orphans. Reading and hearing of Anna Chaplaincy and going on the course I was made aware that people sharing their gifts and life experiences with God’s help could meet the needs of believers and non-believers alike.

We all need spiritual and emotional support. I have received amazing love and kindness since joining Capel Zinc and thank God for the people there. Now I would like to be a part of giving something back.

Anne Jackson again:

I found the information about the limitations and needs of dementia sufferers and their carers particularly helpful. A fifth of the course was devoted to this subject which previously I had ignored!! Very silly, considering 70% of people in care homes are suffering with dementia, and many people are living with dementia at home.

The following information was especially relevant/ interesting to me: there are many different medical causes of dementia which lead to different types of disability. There is an enormous amount of information, guidance and help, including online, for every type of situation including the skills needed to help

e.g. www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-dementia/types-dementia/what-is-dementia

I was particularly blown away by videos in which two different people with dementia shared how they felt about their illness and explained what helped them to cope with living with their difficulties and what increased their problems. (www.christinebryden.com & www.gloriousopportunity.org)

Ellie Jones again:

I feel there is a definite need in the circuit for at least one coordinating Anna Chaplain to oversee the setting up of the extension of the provision of spiritual care for the elderly throughout the circuit, in collaboration with other denominations and faiths, and one or two others to work in specific locations on particular projects, as well as many Anna Friends as can be mustered to help with the work and to hold the work in regular prayer.

Ambitious? Yes. But essential for people to feel that God is with them even at the end of life, and whether in sitting with a person, sharing worship with them, telling stories, making crafts, singing or whatever activity will let the person become aware they are never alone and always loved and valued.



New Synod Chair for 2023 announced

At a recent meeting of the Representative Synod on April 9th the name of the Rev'd Andrew Charlesworth was brought forward and formally approved to be Chair of Wales Synod Cymru from 1st September 2023, when the Rev'd Dr Stephen Wigley ends his term of office. His nomination was accepted by a vote of 104 to 1.

Andrew Charlesworth is currently in his fourteenth year of ministry and serves as Superintendent of the Nottingham North-East Circuit and as Deputy Chair of the Nottingham and Derby District.

His pastoral experience and leadership abilities are matched by a passion for the Gospel and a clear recognition of the challenges and opportunities which the new Synod will face from September.

The Synod nomination committee was impressed by his collegial approach to leadership, which has been forged in his present circuit and district and through his managerial experience in clinical research prior to candidating for the ministry. Mr Charlesworth offers to the Synod a fully-rounded understanding of ministry and a willingness to learn which will contribute well to the present and evolving Synod leadership.

Since he will take up his role one year after the formal inception of the Wales Synod Cymru this September, the Synod was pleased to hear that he is keen to become a Welsh-learner,



Name that church!

I have always enjoyed visiting churches as I travel around the area. Since the last Newsletter I have taken the following photographs of churches large and small that I have visited. Can you recognize any of them? The inside photo is of one of our Circuit churches. There is a small prize for the first person who can correctly identify all four. Email answers only will be accepted revdncsissons@gmail.com Good luck.

Church 1



Church 3



Church 2



Church 4



We need you to help us to fill future editions of Circuit News. If you have any words of wisdom, jokes, pictures, stories you would like to share please send them to us.

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