

# **Wye Brooks Group UPDATE for 8 JANUARY BAPTISM OF CHRIST WHITE**

## **FROM THE VICAR COVENANT**

You might have made a New Year's Resolution, and whether it's to cut down on wine or cream cakes, lose weight or to control some habit, if you have done it's a sure sign that you know you *need* to.

Actually, we *all* need to change, and if we don't think we do, that's *proof* that we do, because we never hit perfection. Part of the falling short are self justification, making light of our poor behaviour and making excuses for it. "I know I shouted at him, God, but he deserved it!"

And that is the starting point for the Christian gospel, clearly there in our liturgies and hymns, that we have sinned, and are totally reliant on the forgiveness generously given to us by God in Christ. What does the hymn say?

Not the labours of my hands  
can fulfil thy law's demands;  
could my zeal no respite know,  
could my tears forever flow,  
all for sin could not atone;  
thou must save, and thou alone.

That Christ bought our place in heaven, and new and rich life on earth for us, rather than that we earned them, is what Christians call the new covenant. We belong to Christ, we accept Christ, we trust Christ and we commit to Christ, and it stands opposed to the Old Covenant, in which you thought were good enough by behaving properly.

If you perchance went into a Methodist Church last weekend, or do so this weekend, your experience may be that of participating in a Covenant Service. It's a service with a magnificent climax: the Covenant Prayer.

The Covenant Prayer sees those who pray it make a personal commitment to God in Christ. We have been saved by our faith in Christ, and therefore we should commit to fully belonging to Christ however difficult.

Are you ready for it? Are you brave enough, committed enough? If you are, pray the prayer and MEAN IT!

## **READINGS EPIPHANY**

Isaiah 60:1-6  
Psalm 72:1-15  
Ephesians 3:1-12  
Matthew 2:1-12

## **BAPTISM OF CHRIST**

Isaiah 42:1-9  
Psalm 29  
Acts 10:34-43  
Matthew 3:13-end

## **(ALTERNATIVE) COLLECT FOR EPIPHANY**

Creator of the heavens,  
who led the Magi by a star  
to worship the Christ-child:  
guide and sustain us,  
that we may find our journey's end  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

## **(ALTERNATIVE) COLLECT FOR THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST**

Heavenly Father,  
at the Jordan you revealed Jesus as your Son:  
may we recognize him as our Lord  
and know ourselves to be your beloved children;  
through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

## **THE COVENANT PRAYER**

**I am no longer my own, but yours.  
Put me to what you will,  
rank me with whom you will;  
put me to doing, put me to suffering;  
let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you,  
exalted for you, or brought low for you;  
let me be full,  
let me be empty,  
let me have all things,  
let me have nothing:  
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things  
to your pleasure and disposal.  
And now, glorious and blessed God,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
you are mine and I am yours. So be it.  
And the covenant now made on earth,  
let it be ratified in heaven.  
Amen.**

# CHRISTIANITY IN THE NEWS

## HE, SHE, IT OR THEY?



Meet Revd Bingo Allison, who is apparently the Church of England's first non-binary priest.

To be non-binary is not to identify as either male or female, which of course gives others a problem about what pronouns to use concerning the individual.

Bingo was born a man and is married with three children, but now prefers to be referred to as 'they', which appears to be simply a matter of evolution for some, but utterly weird for others for whom 'they' is always a plural.

For some of us this is the stuff of nightmares, symptom of an utterly confused and directionless world, in which more and more people are expressing what looks like insanity, or a determined rebellion against society, politicians, authority and everything else.

For others this has been a long time coming. It has finally allowed us the freedom not to be pigeonholed in terms of sex or gender or manipulated by the powerful.

One thing is certain: that in a church turning somersaults to find a satisfactory approach to homosexuality and those who wish to change sex/gender, this is going to cause a lot of extra confusion.

Meanwhile, Revd Bingo describes the transition as follows:

"I was sitting there in the middle of the night when I realised I might need to run my life upside down. It was a deepening spiritual experience, I properly felt God was guiding me into this new truth about myself.

And...

"One of the things that has kept with my ministry ever since is that transition and coming out can and should be a spiritual experience, as well as an emotional and social and sometimes physical one. There is something beautiful about growing into who we were created to be and growing into our authentic selves."

My view? My view is that I have definitely run out of space to give a coherent answer!!

## WARM SPACES

This winter, millions of people are having to make difficult choices about their heating and eating as the cost of living crisis continues to make life difficult.



The Warm Welcome campaign was launched to help people through the cold winter months by making sure communities have spaces where people can come in to warm up free of charge.

Of the 3,679 Warm Welcome spaces open across the UK, churches account for almost half (1785) and 13% of churches offered an additional warm space on Christmas Day.

The Bishop of Durham commented: "... the Christian mission has always put those in need at the centre and, at a time of hopelessness for many, thousands of churches are living this story today by stepping up across the UK to serve people in need and provide a Warm Welcome for those who can't afford to heat their homes."

## DEATH OF AN EX-POPE

Pope Emeritus Benedict, who died a week ago, has been laid to rest, with his funeral led by a successor for the first time in more than 200 years.



Pope Francis led the funeral of the former pope, tenderly touching the coffin as he stood supported on a cane before tens of thousands of mourners, with some calling for the late pontiff to be made a saint.

One commentator described as a "deeply believing Christian", an intellectual, and of course the first pope to resign in six centuries instead of reigning for life." Others called for him to be sainted now, but still others continue to criticise him alleging that he prioritised protecting the Church against complaints made by survivors of clergy sexual abuse over getting justice for them.

## WHITCHURCH WEEKLY



10.30 every Thursday at St Dubricius Church, Whitchurch

A simple informal half hour communion without a sermon or a collection.

Followed by a cuppa and biscuits.

It has always been open to anyone from both the Wye Reaches and Wye Brooks benefices.

Please do come. Relax and enjoy God's presence with us.

## RESPONDING TO THE UKRAINE CRISIS



The Diocese has a web page encouraging us to respond in prayer and action to the ongoing crisis in Ukraine. Go to <https://www.hereford.anglican.org/our-faith/prayers-for-ukraine/>

## UKRAINE FOOD COLLECTION

Tinned food is being collected at KTS Craft Warehouse, Trenchard Street, at the bottom of Edde Cross Street in Ross. They have already made deliveries of clothing and medical equipment, and now it is tinned food which is needed, (no glass). Tins - soup, spaghetti, pies, meat, fruit, plus cereal bars.

## POETRY CORNER JOURNEY OF THE MAGI

A cold coming we had of it,  
Just the worst time of the year  
For a journey, and such a long journey:  
The ways deep and the weather sharp,  
The very dead of winter."  
And the camels galled, sore-footed, [refractory](#),  
Lying down in the melting snow.  
There were times we regretted  
The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,  
And the silken girls bringing sherbet.  
Then the camel men cursing and grumbling  
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,  
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,  
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly  
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:  
A hard time we had of it.  
At the end we preferred to travel all night,  
Sleeping in snatches,  
With the voices singing in our ears, saying  
That this was all folly.

Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,  
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;  
With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,  
And three trees on the low sky,  
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.  
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,  
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,  
And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.  
But there was no information, and so we continued  
And arriving at evening, not a moment too soon  
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,  
And I would do it again, but set down  
This set down  
This: were we led all that way for  
Birth or Death? There was a birth, certainly,  
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,  
But had thought they were different; this Birth was  
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.  
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,  
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,  
With an alien people clutching their gods.  
I should be glad of another death.

by TS Elliott (1927)

## SERVICES CALENDAR FOR THE NEXT THREE WEEKS

Date	Time	Place	Service	Leader
Sunday 8 January	8.30	Welsh Newton	Holy Communion	Ben
Sunday 8 January	10.00	Llangrove	Community Service	Wendy
Sunday 8 January	10.00	Marstow	Holy Communion	Ben
Sunday 8 January	11.00	Goodrich	Holy Communion	Simon
Sunday 15 January	8.30	Welsh Newton	Meditation and Bible Study	Lay led
Sunday 15 January	10.00	Llangrove	Half Hour Communion	Ben
Sunday 15 January	11.00	Goodrich	Morning Service	Penny
Sunday 15 January	6.00	Llangarron	Evening Service	Penny
Sunday 22 January	8.30	Welsh Newton	Holy Communion	Penny
Sunday 22 January	10.00	Marstow	Morning Service	Lay led
Sunday 22 January	10.00	Llangrove	Community Service	Lay led
Sunday 22 January	11.00	Goodrich	Holy Communion	Ben
Sunday 29 January	11.00	Goodrich	Holy Communion	Ben and Simon

### BISHOP'S WEEKLY MESSAGE A MESSAGE FOR NEW YEAR

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smTCL6CID-s>

### OUR OWN LIGHT BITE WHAT'S IN A LIST OF NAMES?

<https://youtu.be/n1FBNnJHisg>

### HOUSE GROUP/PRAYER GROUP

The next **Zoom House Group** will be on Tuesday 10th January, at 10.00am  
The next **Zoom Prayer Group** will be on Tuesday 10th January, at 7.30pm

### EPIPHANY QUOTES

For by gold the power of a king is signified, by frankincense the honour of God, by myrrh the burial of the body; and accordingly they offer Him gold as King, frankincense as God, myrrh as Man.

*St John Chrysostom*

Lord Jesus  
may your light shine our way,  
as once it guided the steps of the magi:  
that we too may be led into your presence  
and worship you, the Child of Mary,  
the Word of the Father, the King of nations,  
the Saviour of mankind;  
to whom be glory for ever.

*Frank Colquhoun*

# MINI BIBLE STUDY WHO IS JESUS? —TWO PORTRAITS IN HEBREWS

(Hebrews 1:2-3)

1. **He is the “heir of all things” (V 2).** This means that the world was created by Him and for Him. The whole history of this world has been mediated through God’s Son. How great He is!

2. **He is the creator of the universe (V 2).** It was by Him that the worlds were made (John 1:3); compare Colossians 1:16. This simple statement from Scripture is very satisfying in these days when unregenerate men place a question mark over the biblical account of the creation.

3. **He is the radiance of God’s glory (V 3).** This is a beautiful expression. It means a shining forth, just as the sunshine in which we revel is the radiance of the sun itself. The Lord Jesus was and is the shining forth of the magnificence and majesty of the eternal God. Bow and worship Him!

4. **He is the exact representation of His being (V 3).** He is the visible expression of all that God is – look up and compare John 1:18. Jesus is the exact replica of God (John 14:9).

5. **He is the One who upholds the universe (V 3).** Jesus holds it together and controls it (Colossians 1:17). Science has an answer to the mystery of the universe and has discovered many great laws, but behind these is the Lord Himself.

6. **He has provided purification for our sins (V 3).** Notice that it is in the past tense: there is no future purgatory because the work is finished.

7. **He is seated in the place of authority and power (V 3).** The words “right hand” mean the place of power and authority (Matthew 28:19). He is also sitting down because His work is done; no priest of the old dispensation could ever do this because his work was never finished (Hebrews 10:11-12,14).

Part 2 of this Bible study will be in this spot next week.

*The letter to the Hebrews is something of a mystery. We don’t know who wrote it, and we don’t know for whom it was originally written. We used to think Paul, but it doesn’t say that, and the language, style and Christology are different from those of Paul’s writings. The main thing is that Christ is our great High Priest.*

# PRAYER FOR OTHERS

## The UK

- HM the King and the Royal Family
- Our Prime Minister and Government
- The hardship caused by rising prices.
- The increasingly important work of food banks.
- Those badly affected by strikes, and those who feel that they have no other option but to strike

## World

- Please continue to pray for the Ukraine, and for Russia, especially in view of attacks on the civilian population of Ukraine.
- Pray for the US and its political chaos and internal anger.
- Pray too about the famine in East Africa, the migrant problem, threats from nations like North Korea and of course Iran, which recently declared itself to have nuclear weapons, and is said to be the biggest sponsor of Russia.
- Pray about rogue nations on the world stage—nations like Iran and North Korea
- Pray for efforts to reduce global warming.

## Health

- The NHS crisis
- The ongoing presence and effects of Covid.
- Those being badly affected by Strep A
- Those suffering from mental health issues

## Our churches and clergy

- For right actions leading to sustainability and growth, especially in the light of the publication of the census result.
- For the prayer life of our churches, and especially as we enter our diocesan year of prayer for mission.
- For the hard decisions which will need to be made about clergy numbers.
- For mission mindedness generally

## Our villages

Our pubs, parish councils, local businesses and schools. Pray for all our communities in these difficult times.

## Pray for people

Please pray for all those you know who are sick or in particular need, and those facing big changes in life.

- Chris as he continues to recover from serious illness.
- Nigel - the continued fight against cancer. His chemo is over. Further tests are looming.
- Bernie and Jill (Bernie’s very elderly parents are very ill).
- The family of Gill Green, whose funeral was at Welsh Newton this week.
- The family of Pat Parkinson, of Welsh Newton Common, who died over the Christmas period.
- The family of Richard and Gail Clarke, whose ashes were interred on Friday at Goodrich

# REGULARS

## PARISH GIVING SCHEME

We are pushing the Parish Giving Scheme because it is the best way of giving to your Church, not just because of *how little hassle* it is to you, but also because of how *safe* and *tax efficient* it is, how *easy it is for treasurers to administer* and how it usually does actually *drive the income of churches up*. And GOOD NEWS—you don't even have to fill in a form. You can set it up by phone. By all means ring your church treasurer for details and fill in a form, or call the number below.

## PARISH GIVING SCHEME

Tel 0333 002 1271

Church	<u>Parish Ref</u>	Church	<u>Parish Ref</u>
Goodrich	180618231	Marstow	180618241
Llangarron	180618239	Llangrove	180618240
Welsh Newton	180618256		

## CONTACTS

Vicar: Revd Philip 'Ben' Bentham  
Tel 01989 770454 Email  
benbentham@yahoo.co.uk

Associate Minister: Revd Simon Tarlton  
Tel 07462 893457

Associate Minister: Revd Penny  
Powdrill Email 01600 714096

If you have suggestions for improving this Update, please do let me know. To UNSUBSCRIBE, simply drop me a line.

## CLERGY HOLIDAYS

TBA

## CLERGY DAY OFF

My usual day off is MONDAY

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE—WILLS



Want to make a difference to your local church? Why not leave it something in your will? It's easy to do, and helps what you care about.



The Llangrove Milk Shed at the Village Hall,  
For farm fresh milk and a few other things like butter, cheese and cake.

Support local businesses!



Our local eateries are important, and without our patronage they risk not being able to survive, especially in this climate.

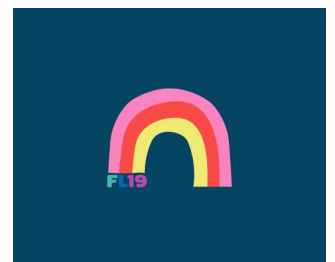
Llangrove - The Royal Arms  
Phone **01989 770267**

Goodrich - The Hostelrie  
Phone **01600 890241**

Goodrich - The Cross Keys  
Phone **01600 890692**

## BLESS THE NHS

Thanks to Helen Shipton, who belongs to our Tuesday prayer group, for giving us details of this initiative to provide a bit of support for NHS workers. Do have a look.



<https://www.frontline19.com/hopeline19/>



# Food Bank

St Mary's Welsh Newton want you to know that they have an informal, voucher-free food bank at the church.

The church is open 24/7

Anyone who feels under pressure financially can just slip in and take what they need without having to register anywhere.

Do gossip this information to anyone whom you think might find it helpful.

Please also feel free to donate food to it yourself.

Thanks.



# Another Food Bank

Christ Church Llangrove have set up the Benefice's Second Food Bank

The church is open during the day.

Anyone who feels under pressure financially can just slip in and take what they need without having to register anywhere.

Please also feel free to donate food to it yourself.

Do gossip this information to anyone whom you think might find it helpful.

Thanks.





### **A notice from St Mary's, Welsh Newton**

We would like to host Growing Good workshops in the New Year for anyone in the benefice who might be interested in attending.

It's a series of six workshops about using social action to benefit the community and grow the church, using the Growing Good Toolkit provided by the Church Urban Fund.

Each session will last about 75 minutes and include a Bible text and reflection, a short film, a group activity and time for prayer.

We have heard from other churches (including a small rural church) that it's an incredibly valuable resource. Anyone interested in joining it or finding out more should email me at [patriciacarswell@gmail.com](mailto:patriciacarswell@gmail.com).