

Wrexham Mission Area News



No. 24

June 2020

Jonathan Smith writes ...

Dear Friends

To say we are living through some strange times would be an understatement. Last year, it was nothing but the Brexit impasse and now it's Coronavirus and none of us are going anywhere very fast! I do hope you are all coping. More than that, I hope that you have found some good things even in lockdown. The apostle Paul experienced more than his fair share of lockdown. For him it was called prison, but he was still able to write: 'We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.' (Romans 8.28) Sometimes, we have a very clear idea in our heads of what's good for us, our families, our churches and our world. When suddenly it's not the way we expect, we can get angry and frustrated. We think maybe God's gone AWOL. There are many things which are bad about the present pandemic and nothing should disguise the suffering it has brought to individuals and families and businesses. The reasons for God allowing such pain are far from apparent to us at this time. But there is the good too, symbolised by a million rainbows in our windows. Encouraging stories can be heard from all parts of our society and that demonstrates the grace of God at work in our world.

I think Paul goes a little further than this. All things, both bad and good work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose. If we see some good stuff happening for those who do not show their love for God in worship or seek to live out their lives purposefully following his calling, how much more should we

see things working for good who love God? This is where the eye of faith is tested most; not when we all have health, wealth, and freedom. It's in times like these, through our faith relationship of love with God, that we begin to see some of His purposes working for good below the surface of life. That we can say in the words of Job 'I will trust him though he slay' (Job 13.15)



River Dee near Trevor. Photo: Jonathan Smith

At the time of writing, it is impossible to know when we can open churches again, even for private prayer. Hopefully, it won't be too long so that we might have access to our sacred spaces. Online services and 'Zoom' meetings have helped those able to work the technology, but shared worship is what we can all participate in sensing the presence of God's Spirit in our gathering together. Let us pray for conditions to allow that to happen sooner rather than later.

In the meantime, stay safe in the Lord and take courage in Him.

Pob Bendith : May God bless you all

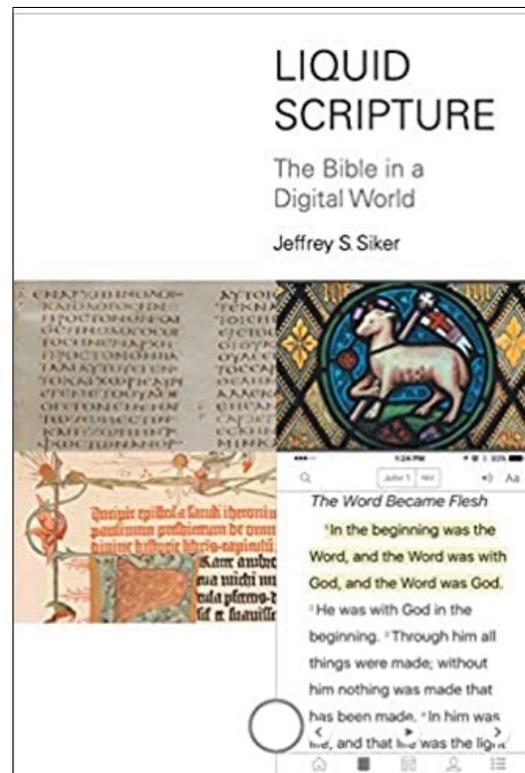
Jonathan

A few thoughts regarding online presence

In 2017 Jeffrey Siker wrote an incredibly insightful book: *Liquid Scripture: The Bible in a Digital World*. His research is largely quantitative, looking at all sorts of data ranging from what websites, apps, and software are available for people to aid them in their reading of the Bible, to what other information these media offer other than the straightforward Word of God. Siker argues throughout his book that since the digital revolution of the past twenty years has caused an 'explosion' in access to data and knowledge, people instinctively expect a wide range of what is called the DIKW pyramid (data, information, knowledge, and wisdom) to be available to them. It is quite normal now to read behind what the newspaper headlines are telling us, to look up our physical symptoms on Google as well as taking the doctor's advice, to research where we can get the best insurance or finance deal from. Many bible websites, apps, and software now will expound the scriptures in all sorts of ways, referring to the original Greek and Hebrew translations, instant glossaries for technical words, geographical maps, info-graphical data, historical references and much more. He is therefore concluding that many website, apps, and software have done this very effectively and are just waiting to be used.

However, Siker's work is limited to just online bible resources and does not offer anything in terms of online worship. Since lockdown, we have walked a tightrope as a church in trying to offer continuity and familiarity for those who are in *exile*, whilst also embracing all the new opportunities we have, especially considering the DIKW pyramid. It is why familiar worship, surrounding, style, tradition is important for the viewers at home. But I have to say, I have not really ventured into anything revolutionary on the scale of what Siker is suggesting just yet. It is not fair to say that the DIKW pyramid is relevant to worship, and Siker doesn't say it is. However, a little later in 2018, Ingalls wrote *Singing the Congregation*. Whilst this book is primarily about music within worship, she does offer some insight on the use of technology within worship, and she goes a little further than Siker.

For Ingalls, there has been a great change in the use of technology, from merely projecting words to save on paper, the use of technology has moved from words towards atmosphere. She argues that fewer screens in worship now are projecting text and are rather projecting pictures instead. She is, therefore, arguing that technology be used to create a certain mood, or environment to aid the worshipper in reaching a numinous event (having a strong religious or spiritual quality, indicating or suggesting the presence of a divinity).

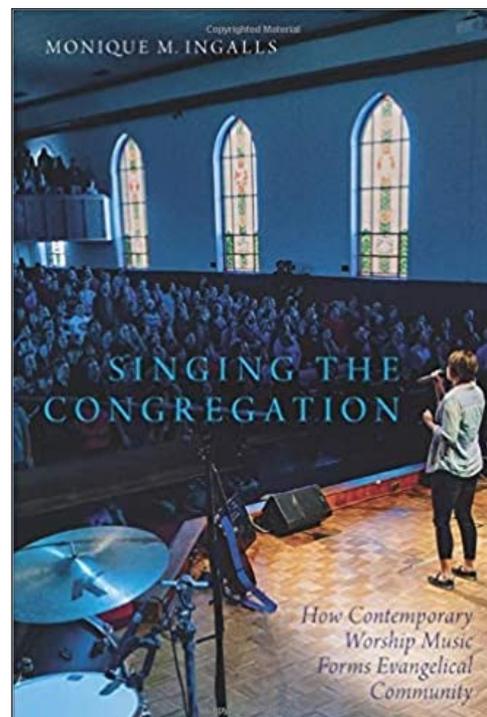


From conversations I have been having with my parishioners, they have been delighted with the efforts that we are making help keep things going throughout this difficult time. And many of us must remember that not everyone has access to the internet and so therefore have provided alternative material for them. But we must also remember that not everyone has a suitable place in their homes where they can *settle* into worship. If it is someone whose family doesn't go to church, perhaps there is a family of six living in a three bedroomed house, perhaps the internet connection isn't brilliant, or dare I say, perhaps their home is not a safe environment, and many other reasons.

However, in world where an app called *Calm* (an app which aims to give people 30 seconds of calm) is becoming very popular, perhaps there is a need for us to use the resources available to us online, as suggested by Siker, to help people create a suitable and holy environment, as suggested by Ingalls, within their homes and within their day in order to enable them to get the very most out of online worship.

The great architects of our church buildings spent huge amounts of time, money, talent, and resources to build places of worship which not only reflect the awesome wonder of God, humankind's reverence of God, but also a suitable and holy place in which humankind can worship God. Perhaps we need similar online architects to help people build such a sanctuary for them to be able to worship God from home?

Sam Erlandson



Books:

Ingalls, Monique. 2018. *Singing the Congregation: How Contemporary Music Forms Evangelical Community*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Siker, Jeffrey S. 2017. *Liquid Scripture: The Bible in a Digital World*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

St. Margaret's

Usually, St Margaret's is busy through the week. Rarely is the car park empty with various activities taking place in the hall, some run by the church and others outside bookings. It is strange to see it so quiet.

None the less, church has continued online with a regular Sunday Facebook Service and other postings during the week for people to follow. After church coffee has been replaced by a Zoom meeting shared with people from St Mark's. Around 25 have ventured have joined in but not all at once. Weekly updates by email have kept regulars informed and been circulated with the bishop's pastoral letters, sermons, suggested bible readings, children's activities and more recently a quiz. For those without internet, a fortnightly emailing has provided similar material.

David, our organist has been actively composing, preparing various responses for use with psalms.

Here is an example of his work performed online by Jayne and Helen Belton for the virtual congregation to join in with. We have been very grateful for their creative talent.



We all expected to be having a farewell party for Rebecca and her family on the last Sunday in March and to share our last service with her on Easter Day. In the event, her move and licensing in the Denbigh Mission Area was postponed so we have continued to benefit from her ministry. She and the family were instrumental in setting up the production of PPE here in Wrexham which gained national recognition. She has contributed the bible study to this edition of MA News. Please keep them all in your prayers as they continue to prepare for an eventual move to Trefnant.

Jonathan Smith

Psalm 31. 1-5

In thee O Lord have I put my trust

PSALM 31 V.1 - RESPONSE

slow $\text{♩} = 88$

IN THEE O LORD HAVE I PUT MY TRUST

© David Evans 5/20



St. Mark's

The people of St. Mark's church, like the community they serve, face many challenges. When the original 'Queens Park' residents moved in in the 1950s and 1960s they had to work very hard to ensure the estate had places of worship. So challenges have always been part of the scene here.

Because the estate was built and the community formed in a short 10 year period, 60 years ago, recent years have seen the need to replace the first generation local school buildings and local health centre. The church of St. Mark however has had no significant refurbishment or improvements made to the building over the decades, so it now looks and feels very sad.



While local schools and health facilities have been replaced, in the recent decade of austerity, the local community has lost its main community centre at Kingsley Circle. The people at St Mark's believe it is time to give St. Marks a facelift both inside and out as part of a major refurbishment. We feel that with some imagination the building can be reordered to become a well-equipped and well situated local church and community centre and in this edition of Mission Area news we would like to give you some more information, hoping you will catch the vision, pray and stand with us as we take on this challenge. The images show how our architect envisages the hall and the sanctuary



Recently completed stages of the challenge include meeting with our community sounding group, the analysis of our residents' survey and we currently await finalising of the architect's plans, then the applications for grants, which we estimate need to total in excess of £300,000 . Recent years have seen a developing outward looking approach at St. Marks with our existing facilities being used by several community groups, projects & of course our St Asaph / Church Army Centre of Mission working in this, the most deprived town community.

This is indeed a major challenge for our small congregation at St.Marks.

If any members of Mission Area congregations feel they could support us with gifts of their time, or talents or funds, we would love to hear from you.

St. Mark's, continued ...

Caia Friars

The community of Caia Friars celebrated their first birthday in February by embracing a very old tradition of religious communities, the practice of hospitality. The Friars are committed to meeting at least once a year for a meal, so we arranged it on Shrove Tuesday and invited all those volunteers who help St Marks maintain their Food bank outlet and to operate the Holiday Hunger project.

With a wonderful team of Friar chefs, led by Elaine Smith we had an enjoyable evening hosted by our Abbot, Jonathan. More recently in early May the Friars arranged their first ZOOM based prayer meeting with 12 of us joining together in this new way.

The Age of Adaptation

Like the whole of the Mission Area, the days after Shrove Tuesday brought some challenges to the St Marks congregation with lockdown of our church building. Every congregation has learned to adapt by innovation and utilising some new tools for the first time in the church's history. At St. Marks it has meant:

Sunday Services on Facebook; Food Bank operating out of a van parked outside St Mark's; packs of Sunday School type materials delivered each week to 60 children on Caia Park by Elaine and Chris; Josh in touch with young people from the TIN CAN using social media and other technological wonders, and members of the congregation receiving Jonathan's much appreciated weekly letter...

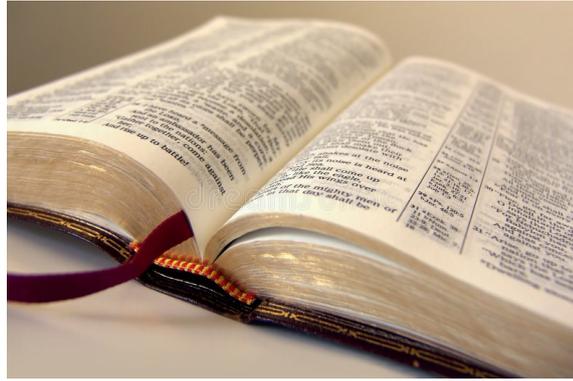
According to the statistics on our Facebook page, it's amazing how many people dip into our Sunday services sometime during the following week. We wonder whether we will ever meet them? But whether we have that opportunity or not, let's pray that some will meet with God, and come to know Jesus as their Saviour and Lord.

Art Ellinson



Bible Study

Ephesians 3:14-21



¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

This beautiful prayer was possibly penned by the apostle Paul to the church of the Ephesians, whilst he was in prison, in his words – so that they might not lose heart. It is the prayer that my mother wrote into a card for me, many years ago, when I was confirmed. And a prayer that we should probably pray for one another on a regular basis.

Paul says that he kneels before the Father to pray. This would have been unusual at the time, as people tended to stand to pray (cf Mark 11:25). This prayer therefore was one of unusual solemnity. Paul prays to his Father, the early Christians have adopted the usage of the term from the use by Jesus in the Lord's prayer.

How wonderful that Paul's prayer is based not upon the limits of human attainment, but upon the glorious, infinite riches of God. Paul prays that these riches might strengthen Christians in their inner being. He uses the idea of the Trinity to do so, it is God the Father's glorious riches, the power of the Spirit and Christ dwelling in our hearts through faith. As Jesus comes to dwell in our hearts then we become rooted and established in love. And Paul prays that through this love in our hearts we would come to realise just how vast the love of Christ actually is, how wide and long, how high and how deep. Remember the words of Jesus at the Lord's supper ³⁴ "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35). To love each other in the vastness of the love of Christ is a very large command. But it is through the power of God's Spirit that we need to do so. This is the privilege of all the Lord's holy people, all Christians, not for just the chosen few. To know and experience the love of Christ, and to share that in our own lives, is better than any gift of knowledge or wisdom. This gift of love is still imparted to the Church today, be blessed as you receive it.

Rebecca Sparey-Taylor

Mission Area Conference, 19 May 2020

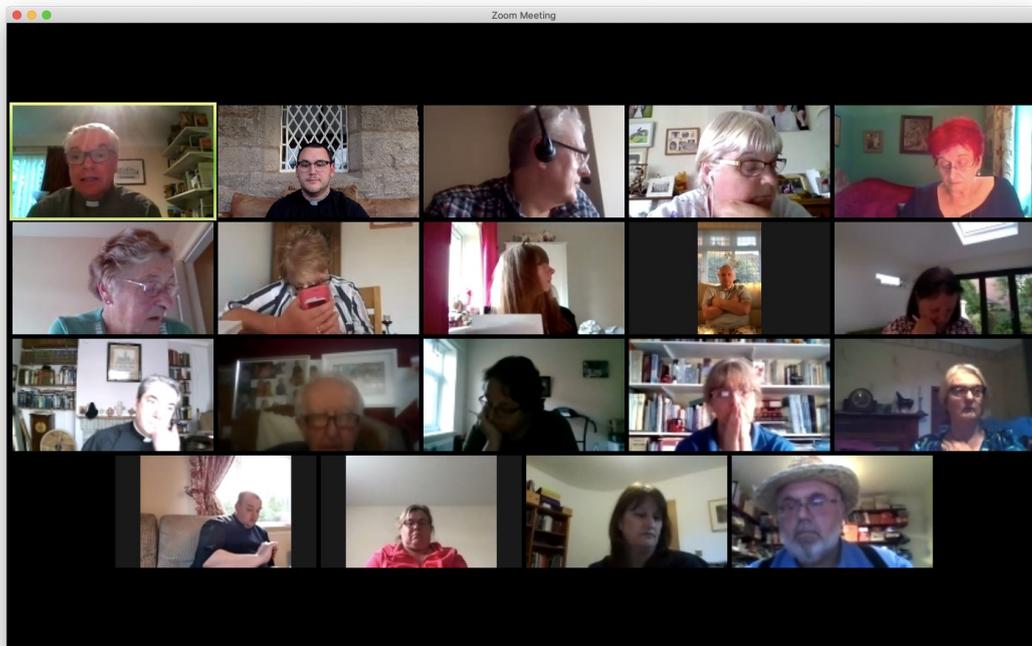
This was of course an unusual experience and we were delighted that so many ventured into the unknown territory of Zoom!

The Agenda offered members the opportunity to comment on their experience of worship during lockdown. The clergy were congratulated on their embracing of the technological methods available, and appreciation was expressed of the varieties of services offered, enabling us to be together in new experiences, “bringing God into our front room”. It was also remarked that people who might not come to church were able to dip into worship at times suitable to them - and it was also suggested that the Church buildings as places of uninterrupted quiet would be more valued than ever before, especially for those whose homes might not offer that. There was appreciation as well for the Bible Study that was offered.

We were pleased to hear that the Revd’s Andy and Rachel Kitchin, and the curate Luke, along with their families, move to Wrexham in May to prepare for their leading of the Resource Church on Hope Street, the launch of which has inevitably been delayed. However, we hear that plans are afoot for this to take place towards the end of January 2021. In the meanwhile we hold our new colleagues steadily in our prayers.

The next Mission Area Conference will take place on 29 September; we hope that we may be able to meet in reality, but if not, virtually, through the resources once again of Zoom.

Ann Owen



Mission Area Conference Zoom meeting , 19 May. Screenshots

St. James'

Last year, Julie and Neil Barlow attended a 'Walk Through the Bible' workshop elsewhere in Wales. They were so impressed with it, that they encouraged us to consider hosting a workshop ourselves. We were a little unsure that we could sell enough tickets to cover the costs, but once we'd taken a 'straw poll' among members of St James' and St John's, we decided to go ahead.

A Walk Through the Bible workshop spends a day giving an overview of either the Old or New Testament. It gives people the opportunity to find the answers to their questions, to learn the entire storyline and how it all fits together, and to hear about God's amazing plans for his people, then and now. It's fun and informative, and brings the Bible to life.

St James Church Council decided to book an Old Testament workshop, and the date chosen was Saturday 29 February. It was publicised across the Mission Area, to other local churches through Christians Together in Wrexham, and across the Diocese through the weekly email bulletin, 'StAR'. Tickets cost £14.00, which covered the cost of the workshop, including a booklet to take home afterwards, which also acts as a ticket to any future Walk Through the Old Testament workshops you choose to attend. (I brought my booklet along from a workshop I attended in 1999, and found that the promise of free entry still held good). The ticket price also helps to fund the work of Walk Through the Bible in schools. So although it seems like a lot of money, given that it doesn't include any refreshments, it's well worth the cost.

Those attending were advised to bring a packed lunch, and a cushion, given that they were to sit on the pews in church all day. In fact the day was well broken up, with each session lasting about an hour, with comfort breaks in between. St James' put on hot and cold drinks, and two of our young people took the opportunity to provide delicious cakes, for which they asked for donations towards their proposed trip to Finland this summer.



The Workshop in progress

In total, 39 people came along on the day, including three teenagers. Most of the Mission Area churches were represented, and there were a few people from further afield. The feedback we received afterwards was entirely positive, leading us to think that we will book a New Testament workshop in due course. We were discussing whether it should be later this year, or early next year, but of course the coronavirus lockdown will have an impact on all future plans.

Sarah Errington

St John's

Lockdown has forced us all to learn new skills. After eight weeks since full lockdown (and nine if you count the Sunday beforehand, when we had no services in church), I've had to learn how to 'broadcast' a live service on Facebook, and how to use Zoom. It's been a steep learning curve!

Since Sunday 29 March, a service has been livestreamed simultaneously to St John's and St James' Facebook pages. Later on, the link has been posted on the websites of the two churches, so it's available to those not on Facebook. The first service was very simple, but since my son, Joel, offered to help with the technical side of things, we have been able to include pictures, words, recorded readings, and thanks to Steve and Andrea Shotton, music as well. The services have been well received, and although we haven't achieved a massive number of viewers, there are people watching regularly who are not members of our churches.

There are advantages to doing worship online, in particular the fact that it allows people to take part at their own convenience, and in the case of 'visitors', anonymously if they so choose. I have found that people are very happy to record a reading, where they might not be so happy to stand up in church to read, or even to commit to being in church on a particular Sunday. But I believe that all our members are missing meeting in church, and it's very difficult to do anything interactive through the medium of online worship. We're also even more dependent on technology than we are in church. Churches using Zoom for their services were unable to gather on Sunday 17 May, due to Zoom deciding that it was time for a major update, which meant taking most of their servers out of use for a few hours – in the middle of the night in the US, meaning that it caused problems mid-morning in the UK.

We have also started a meeting over Zoom to have a chat after the livestream service has finished on a Sunday. That has also been valued by those who have joined in, although it is clear that we need 'break out' groups to enable things to flow easily.

As I write, I have just started a Christianity Explored course online. Our first Zoom meeting went very well, and we look forward to the rest of the course. As we move out of lockdown, I could see a case for continuing to do courses like this online, at least on an occasional basis – it might, for example, make it easier for those with young children at home to take part.

Sarah Errington

We are very fortunate that Steve and Andrea are providing us with recordings of songs for our Sunday worship.



WREXHAM MISSION AREA NEWS

Editor: Nick Roe (All Saints'), 07807772307;

nickroe01@gmail.com

St. Giles'

This time of lockdown has affected us in so many different ways. I'm writing these words on Ascension Day (21 May), while I'm waiting for my film to upload. This has become the story of my life as well as that of many clergy. In an attempt to reach as many people as possible everything has gone online in various forms, and everything seems to be either livestreamed on Facebook, or in our case, pre-recorded and loaded to YouTube.

This has all created an interesting dynamic. Many churches are reporting massive numbers of 'views' for services, and we at St Giles' have realised that we have a steady and faithful following for our daily Evening Prayer, and that, encouragingly, our reach is now global (we have subscribers to our YouTube channel on at least three continents), but that we have attracted local people who do not come to church to engage with what we are doing. Very often, we forget that our church buildings can be very frightening places to enter, and this applies to our small churches as much, if not more, than our larger buildings: you can get lost in a large church, but in a small church there is nowhere to hide.

So, what are we learning? Well, we now know that there is an appetite for church on-line either as a taster for 'real' church or as a substitute, so this is something that we need to explore after the crisis is over, but also that our communities stretch very much further than our immediate neighbourhood. At the same time, we also know that we need not be apologetic for our place in society, and that there is genuine good will for what we do.

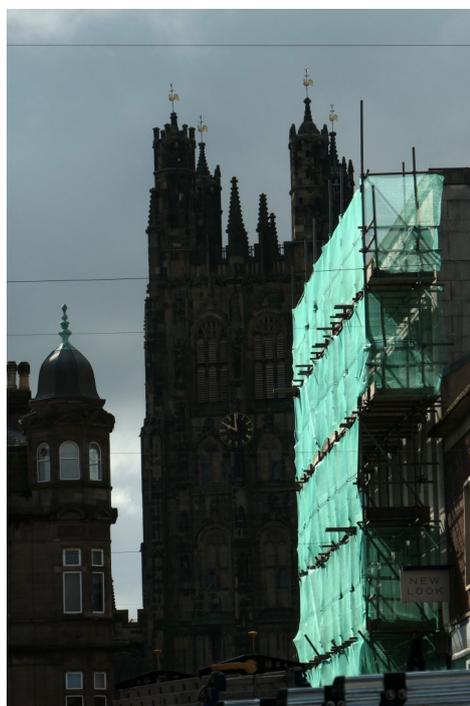
But what is important is that when we return to 'normal', we need time to reflect on what we have learned, what we can do better, and what maybe we can leave behind.

Jason Bray, Ascension Day 2020

Your favourite churches ...

Paul Whitham, our Tourism Officer at St Giles', has recently reminded us that the National Churches Trust's current campaign is showcasing favourite churches chosen by the general public – and on the website at the moment there are no Welsh ones! So please do submit yours and encourage others to do the same. Submit your favourite here:

<https://www.explorechurches.org/your-favourites>



Work progresses on Resource Church in the former Burton building, Hope Street (see p. 8)

Photo: Nick Roe

Wrexham Mission Area

Mission Area Leader: Rev Jonathan Smith

Mission Area Administrator: Ann Owen

01978 355808 or 07751 422594;

office@wrexhamparish.org.uk

St. Giles' Parish Church LL13 8LS

Sundays: 8.00 am Eucharist; 9.30am All Age Worship; 11am Sung Eucharist; 6pm (1st Sunday only) Cymun Bendigaid; 6pm (3rd Sunday only) Taizé Prayer. Thursdays: 11am Eucharist

Vicar: Rev Dr Jason Bray. 07957 222418;

vicar@wrexhamparish.org.uk

Curate: Rev James Tout

St. Margaret's, Garden Village Chester Rd LL11 2SH

Sundays: 8.15 am Holy Communion

9.30am Sung Services (HC 2nd & 4th)

5th Sundays Joint with St Mark's

Wednesdays: 11am Holy Communion (except 1st) at Abbeyfield, Box Lane

Vicar of St. Margaret's & St. Mark's:

Rev Jonathan Smith: 01978 350797;

jonathan@plwyfwreccsam.org.uk

Curate: Rev Rebecca Sparey-Taylor

curateofwrexham@outlook.com

St. Mark's, Caia Park, Bryn Eglwys Rd LL13 9LA

Sundays: 9.30am Traditional Services 1st & 3rd

11.00am All Age Worship (HC 2nd & 4th)

Vicar of St. Margaret's & St. Mark's:

Rev Jonathan Smith: 01978 350797;

jonathan@plwyfwreccsam.org.uk

Assistant Curate: Rev Rebecca Sparey-Taylor

curateofwrexham@outlook.com

St. John's, Rhosnesni, Borrass Rd LL13 9ER

Sundays: 9.30 am Holy Communion (1st, 2nd, 4th); 9.30 am Matins (3rd); 4.00 pm 'Service Station - Food for Body and Soul' (including Holy Communion 3rd); Wednesdays: 10.00 am Holy Communion

Rev Sarah Errington: 01978 266018;

vicarstjohnswxm@gmail.com

St. James', Rhosddu, Rhosddu Rd LL11 2NW

Sundays: 11.00 am All Age Worship (1st); Holy Communion (2nd); Morning Prayer (3rd); All Age Communion (4th)

Vicar of St. John's & St. James's:

Rev Sarah Errington.: 01978 266018;

vicarstjohnswxm@gmail.com

Holy Trinity, Rhostyllen, Esclusham, LL14 4DW

Sundays: 9.30am Sung Eucharist (3rd Sunday: Family Eucharist)

4th Sunday (summer) : 6pm Evensong & Benediction

Wednesdays 10.30am Eucharist (Walsingham Mass & Exposition every 1st Wednesday)

Vicar of All Saints' & Holy Trinity:

Rev Sam Erlandson: s.erlandson@hotmail.co.uk

01978 513716

Gift Aid Secretary: Mrs. K. Erlandson 01978 513716

ka.erlandson@hotmail.co.uk

All Saints', Poyser Street, LL13 7RT

Sundays: 11am Sung Eucharist (Family Service 2nd Sunday)

1st & 3rd Sundays: 4pm Calm Service

Thursdays: 10am Eucharist

Vicar of All Saints' & Holy Trinity:

Rev Sam Erlandson: s.erlandson@hotmail.co.uk

01978 513716

Gift Aid Secretary: Mrs Claire Lunn 01978 263719

Claire.1.lunn@gmail.com

St. Mary's, Bersham

1st Sunday: 11am Morning Prayer; 3rd Sunday 11am Holy Communion. Contact: Lloyd Fitzhugh:

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