

INFORM



***URC
VAN ROAD
CAERPHELLY
December 2025/
January 2026***

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A Message from our Pastorate Minister, Rev. Clare Nutbrown-Hughes

Annwyl ffrindiau / Dear friends,

Today I had the privilege of being part of a team of volunteers welcoming classes of Year 2 children to *Christmas Wrapped Up* sessions at Van Road. It was joyous to see – and hear! – the children's enthusiasm and curiosity as they explored the Christmas story through activities led by the charity, Club 707. I wondered afterwards about how exposure to that joy and excitement might have impacted us adults there.

Advent as we know can be a tricky time to navigate, packed as it is with tradition and memories and expectation. From the very get-go the season is filled with contradictions: As the natural world starts to slumber, our to-do lists can become frenzied; as the dark nights lengthen, the bright lights dazzle; as social diaries fill up, our loneliness can come into sharper focus. Our attention and instincts are pulled in multiple different ways, and we can be hard on ourselves when we know we are distracted from the big picture of Christmas that we shared with those children today. The story of God coming down to earth out of love for us and creation.

But I wonder if we might be kinder on ourselves and recognise it doesn't have to be a case of either/or - we either focus on the big picture or become absorbed in our day-to-day lives? Perhaps Advent is a time when

we simply make space to *notice* God's hope, peace, joy, love where we can in our everyday, whether it is in the squeals of children or the cold quiet of a December night or even a shared smile with a fellow frazzled shopper in a supermarket.

Being a people of hope can seem a tall ask when there is so much pain, conflict and division in the world. Yet we follow a Shepherd born where the animals slept, whose parents were preoccupied with their small family's safety and survival, and it was precisely into that situation that the world was surprised by hope. Our God is not a God who shuns the everyday but a God who sees us and joins us there. My prayer is that we can be kind to ourselves and know that the gift of God's presence is a gift to us in our daily lives.

I look forward to being with you on December 14th and on Christmas Day. It has been such a privilege to begin to serve you and God in Caerphilly and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you again for your welcome and to wish you every blessing this Advent and Christmas.

I leave with a prayer written by Henri Nouwen which captures the contradictions of Advent but expresses the hope rooted in the Good Shepherd who is to come.



Lord Jesus,

Master of both the light and the darkness,
send your Holy Spirit
upon our preparations for Christmas.

We who have so much to do
seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day.

We who are anxious over many things
look forward to your coming among us.

We who are blessed in so many ways
long for the complete joy of your kingdom.

We whose hearts are heavy
seek the joy of your presence.

We are your people, walking in darkness,
yet seeking the light.

To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!"

Amen.

Pob bendith,

Clare



An Elder writes ...

'Ding dong merrily on high' has long been a Christmas favourite of mine. A carol which does not attempt to recount the story of Christ's birth but instead bubbles over with joy at the miracle of his coming to earth. So the repeated Glorias cascade down from heavenly heights until they ripple through sea level and propel us into a cry of 'Hosanna!'

Such outbursts of joy are fully justified because of the eternal life-changing arrival of Jesus. They are also needed in today's world where the devil's disciples are so visible and strident. However, if you turn to 'Rejoice and Sing' you will not find, Ding Dong Merrily therein and nor will you find, 'The First Noel !' Curiously, the editors have chosen to include a generous number of obscure Christmas offerings. For example, Hymn 152, 'Ring a bell for peace,' uses a melody which modulates depressingly into minor mode and seems at odds with the general sense of the words. Hymn 178 contains a final verse which is poetically clunky and, to start with, very negative in tone. I can't imagine ever wanting to sing this on Christmas Day as the authors' intended.

Is there a need for excessively joyful Christian songs and carols? Indeed there is! World peace is far away. Russia, North Korea, China, Iran and its terrorist armies are a present and future threat with Ukraine, Baltic nations Taiwan, Middle East, South Sudan and Northern Nigeria already suffering. Domestically, the UK endures a growth in Anti Semitism and in civil disorder.

To me, it seems that we now have a growing entitlement culture. Huge numbers of working-age people are, for whatever reason, living entirely on benefits. I believe it is unsustainable.

In these difficult times I like to recall some of Jesus' words. ...

'In this world there are many troubles but I have overcome the world'.

And so can we as Jesus promised us. I am never sure that I, 'Fight a good fight.' I am never sure that I am much of a disciple of Jesus. But I cling to my faith that He will always be near me in troubled times.

And through Christmas and New Year I shall be warbling

'Ding Dong, Ding Dong. Hosanna in Excelsis.'

Happy Christmas and a peaceful new year! Peter.



Come and Sing!

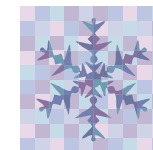
St David's Uniting Church invite you to come and sing carols at Sainsbury's, Pontypridd on Monday 15th December, 6.30pm.

Raising money for Christian Aid.

From the editor ...

Christmas' True Meaning

By Deborah Ann Belka



Let Christmas' true meaning,
rise up in you today...
may you see the real splendour
of Jesus' birth on this day.

May His beauty and grandeur,
cause your heart to sing
may the gift of His excellence
become your eternal spring.

May His majesty you behold,
with all dignity and honour
may the fullness of His truth
glorify His heavenly Father.

May the wonder of His grace,
reveal its magnificence in you
may the gratefulness you feel
be in all you say and do.

Let Christmas' true meaning,
bring your Saviour near today
may you see the need for Him
today, and every day.

Sending Christmas and New Year blessings.

Diane

Pulpit Supply



December

7th, 10.30am	Ms Lynda Jones
14th, 10.50	Rev. Clare Nutbrown-Hughes Communion
21st, 10.30am	Mr Rob Moverley
<u>25th, 10.00am</u>	Christmas Day Rev. Clare Nutbrown-Hughes
28th, 10.30am	No Service

January

4th, 10.30am	Mr Lewis Lewis-Head
11th, 10.30am	TBA
18th, 10.30am	Rev. Andrew J. Davies
25th, 10.30am	Dr. Peter Speakman

Christmas Tree Festival at St Martin's

Through December and in to January

FUTURE NOTICE

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity Service

Mass at St Helen's

Saturday 24th January

5.30

Ho! Ho! Ho!

Knock knock.

(Who's there?)

Mary.

(Mary who?)

Mary Christmas!

Knock, knock.

(Who's there?)

Anna.

(Anna who?)

Anna Happy New Year!

Why did Santa's helper see a therapist?

Because he had low self-esteem.

What happens if you eat the Christmas decorations?

You get tinsel-itus.

I bought my son a fridge for Christmas.

I can't wait to see his face light up when he opens it.

Lectionary Readings

December



- 7th Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-7;
Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12
- 14th Isaiah 35:1-10; James 5:7-11; Psalm 146;
Matthew 11:2-15
- 21st Isaiah 7:10-17; Psalm 24; Romans 1:1-7
Matthew 1:18-25
- 25th Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 2; Hebrews 1:1-12;
John 1:1-18
- 28th Isaiah 63:7-14; Psalm 111; Galatians 4:4-7;
Matthew 2:13-23

January

- 4th Jeremiah 31:7-14; Psalm 147:12-20;
Ephesians 1:3-14; John 1:1-18
- 6th Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14;
Ephesians 3:1-12; Matthew 2:1-12
- 11th Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 29; Acts 10:34-43;
Matthew 3:13-17
- 18th Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 40:1-11;
1 Corinthians 1:1-9; John 1:29-42
- 25th Isaiah 9:1-4; Psalm 27:1,4-9;
1 Corinthians 1:10-18; Matthew 4:12-23

Van-guard Events



Sunday 7th December pm

Young Stars Concert

Thursday 11th December 1pm

Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama Student
Recital
(Free entry, retiring collection)

Saturday 13th December 7pm,

In Winter's Heart £10

Songs and Carols for a Winter Evening
Joelene Griffiths-Soprano
Scott Baker-Lute



20th December pm

Wind and Strings Christmas Concert

NB More details and Pricing TBC

Thursday 8th January, 1pm

Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama Student
Recital
(Free entry, retiring collection)



CHRISTMAS WITH THE CHORUS

Caerphilly Community
chorus

WITH SPECIAL GUESTS RHYS ARCHER & EMMA EVANS

FRIDAY 5TH DECEMBER AT 7PM

VANGUARD CENTRE,
VAN ROAD,
CAERPHILLY,
CF83 1JZ

TICKETS AVAILABLE ON THE DOOR
ADULTS- £7
UNDER 16'S- FREE
TICKETS INCLUDE REFRESHMENTS.

HAVE A
Holly Jolly
CHRISTMAS

Prayer from ECO Box 2022 (Green Christmas)

Loving God, You came to us, Emmanuel, God with us, in
the most humblest of ways;
an upcycled feeding trough for a bed and a shed full of
animals for a nursery.

Help us to see and celebrate the humility of your birth, not
with extravagance, but let us look to the interests of others
in our world and the interests of creation.

Help us to follow your example, not grasping for yourself,
but giving of yourself.

Help us to make this Christmas more meaningful by having
less, more special by making a difference and more spiritual
by leaving alone the material.
Help us in Jesus' name,

Amen.

DEAR SANTA,
I have been very good
for the last week or so.

Lets just
focus
on that.



Young Wives

Mondays 7.30pm

All ladies, any age, welcome



December

1st Carol Service

8th Final Meeting
Mince pies, Secret Santa
(present spend no more than £5)

Winter break until 2nd March

Bible Study

Thursday 4th December,

10.30am

Last session before a winter break.

Studying the first chapter of Luke.

All are welcome.

Lynda

Calendar of Regular Events in the Church

Coffee Morning, 10.30am First Wednesday each month

Communion service 2nd Wednesday each month, 10.30am

‘Only Boys Aloud’ rehearse Every Monday, 6.30,

Caerphilly Chorus rehearse Every Friday, 7.30pm,

University of the Third Age (U3A) First Friday each month
1.30pm (usually)

U3A singing group Thursdays fortnightly, 2pm

‘Young Wives’ (All ladies welcome) Every Monday 7.30pm

Bible Study , 1st and 3rd Thursdays in the month, 10.30am

NB Some activities stop during school holidays. Please check for any changes to this list.

Coffee Morning

Wednesday 3rd December

10.30am

Raising funds for RNLI



This time of Year

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

EPIPHANY	ADVENT	CHRISTMAS	CANDLES
SHEPHERDS	MAGI	MARY	JOSEPH JESUS
ANGELS	STABLE	MANGER	LOVE HEROD GIFTS
PEACE ON EARTH	STAR	JOURNEY	MYRRH
GOLD	GLORY	GOD	HEAVEN SON

We hold in our prayers -



Rev Malcolm Shapland

Enfys Hawthorn

Carol Booth

Cathy Vernalls

Hilary and Steve Akerman Chris Harling

Phyllis and family Wendy Angove's family

Barbara Stewart Diana Hibbert

Dave Jenkins and all the family

The people of Gaza, Israel and Palestine and the fragile peace.

All those without a home or warm shelter.

Those countries facing hardships, particularly in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia, Iran, Sudan and Yemen and all those desperate for their safety and future, particularly the people of Ukraine.

Those people helping to welcome and settle refugees.

World leaders that they make sound, fair and just decisions particularly in the USA new administration.

Permanent peace in Gaza and a just peace in Ukraine.

CHURCH ELDERS

Ms Lynda Jones 02920 884022

Mr Robert Moverley 02920 866336

Dr Peter Speakman 02920 883968

Mrs Phyllis Frayling 07870 752306

Mrs Margaret Baldwin 02920 867027

Mrs Cathy Vernalls 07527 598127

Any items for the next edition should be
submitted by the 19th of the month

to

Mrs Diane Moverley

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**They have seen his star in
the east and have come to
worship him.**

