

The New Times

February 2021

The Parish Magazine of Llantilio Crossenny,
Llanvetherine, Llanvapley and Penrhos



It's a new year in our parishes and our farmers are making the news



From the Vicarage

Dear Friends,

Though there is much to weigh our spirits down at present, there are also visions of simple beauty too.

As I look out of the window, there are catkins appearing on the trees, and an array of birds pecking at the food hanging from the branches. Snowdrops are everywhere, lambs are beginning to appear in the fields, and the taste of Spring is in the air.

Having just returned from taking a service in Newport, I breathe a sigh of relief on returning home. I often half jest about suffering from 'city-itis' if I have been in town for more than hour. "Country roads, take me home...."

Though we are living through strange times, the rhythm of the natural world brings a welcome sense of order and changelessness.

It appears that even the church authorities are now planning on radical changes to parish life, all of which leads to a great sense of un-ease. Thank goodness our faith is not in structures or church authorities, but in the One who holds us in the palm of His hand, whose love never changes, yet changes everything.

With every blessing to you all,

Heidi



Having had a lot more time to read, I came across this beautiful passage about bereavement, written by William Penn. I find its sentiments ring true, and just wanted to take this opportunity to share it with you:

"They that love beyond the world cannot be separated by it.

Death cannot kill what never dies.

Nor can spirits ever be divided, that love and live in the same divine principle, the root and record of their friendship.

If absence be not death, neither is theirs.

Death is but crossing the world, as friends do the seas; they live in one another still.

For they must needs be present, that love and live in that which is omnipresent.

In this divine glass they see face to face; and their converse is free, as well as pure.

This is the comfort of friends, that though they may be said to die, yet their friendship and society are, in the best sense, ever present, because immortal."

Monmouth Diocese – changes to the governance of our parish churches

On 20th January, Revd. Heidi attended a Zoom meeting with other clergy from the Diocese of Monmouth to discuss changes in the way in which Ministry Areas are to function. It became clear at this meeting that several important changes are in the pipeline. Churchwardens were contacted and it was agreed to meet virtually on Sunday 24th January to discuss how these changes might affect our churches.

At the moment we are part of a group of four parishes. Over the last few years we have been made aware that our group is in fact part of a wider Ministry Area made up of the Grosmont group, the Llantilio Pertholey group, Llanvihangel Crucorney and the Llanddewi Rhydderch group. Revd. Gaynor Burrett, who is based in Grosmont, is our Ministry Area leader.

Churchwardens agreed at the meeting that the new changes are very far reaching and their reaction has been very strongly against the changes. One of the changes is to take decision making away from each of our Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) and give powers and responsibilities to a new group (a Ministry Area PCC) containing representatives from all churches in the Ministry Area.

At the moment we are unsure what this means but it could mean that each of our church PCCs will no longer exist and all our funds will be managed by the new PCC. All of the churchwardens in our group expressed their grave concerns and believe the changes will have implications for the future of our churches. It was thought that discussion of this matter should be delayed until Covid restrictions are eased and face to face meetings can take place. The diocese and Bishop Cherry have been contacted asking for further information and clarification. Bishop Cherry replied in an email

Meetings have been planned over the next couple of months for each of the new Ministry Areas where questions can be asked and concerns raised. We are encouraging up to 6 people from each church to attend so hopefully there will be the opportunity for those most concerned to come along and have their questions answered and the plans, and the reasons behind them, clarified.

Dates for these meetings have not as yet been published. Details of the proposed changes can be found on the Diocese of Monmouth website.

<https://bit.ly/39yvrfS>

There is also a short video - <https://youtu.be/QSv8luzXfnU>

You may like to download the document entitled 'Diocese of Monmouth Ministry Areas – Frequently Asked Questions' from the above webpage which explains the changes

Your thoughts are very welcome. Please contact Revd. Heidi if you wish to voice your opinions on these changes. llantiliovicar@aol.com 01600 780240

Christine Everitt recently contacted TNT and has sent a picture of her favourite tea cosy and teapot. Christine said '*Here's a poem I love that really makes me smile. It kind of reminds me, when all is said and done, how much we Brits find solace through all life's trials by reaching for the teapot... one of God's great gifts.*'

When the world is all at odds
When the mind is all at sea
Then cease the useless tedium
And brew a cup of tea.
There is magic in its fragrance
There is solace in its taste;
And the laden moments vanish
Somehow into space.
The world becomes a lovely thing;
There's beauty as you'll see
Because you briefly stopped mid-stride
To brew a cup of tea.



A new solar farm in our area

TNT has been contacted by a group of residents from the Penpergwm area who have set up a campaign to oppose a large scale energy development. Great House Energy Ltd have submitted a notice to the Welsh Government of their intention to apply for planning permission to build a large solar farm (around about 45MW) with containerised battery storage on land similar to the land shown in the picture. When the application is submitted it will be decided by the government and not the county council as it is deemed to be a 'Development of National Significance'. The group has called itself HUSTLE which stands for Help Us Stop This Looming Eyesore. The group contains a number of people from Llanddewi Rhydderch who will be able to see the development if it is built. If you are interested in finding out more please contact Don Grant penpergwmhustle@gmail.com



Training opportunities for volunteers Monmouthshire County Council is aware of the important role volunteers play in our communities. Without the support of volunteers our churches, community councils, village halls and other community organisations would not be able to function as effectively as they do. The council are working with a number of partner organisations and community groups to offer a range of courses to support volunteers. Examples of courses include: – Safeguarding, Introduction to Grant Writing

Online Workshop, Using Social Media to promote and market your community work, Leading other Volunteers, Getting the best out of Young People and many more. More details can be found on the council's website www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/community-leadership-programme

Llantilio Crossenny News

During a storm last autumn, St. Teilo's Church suffered damage to the south side of the roof which allowed the rain to come in and damage the ceiling over the south isle resulting in part of the ceiling coming down.

George Edwards Builders were consulted and agreed to do the repair work in January when no services were planned owing to the coronavirus. I am pleased to report that this work has been completed and St Teilo's is once again secured from the elements.

We are indeed very grateful to George Edwards Builders for fitting in this work in their very busy schedule and for the excellent workmanship. I would also like to thank Rob Morgan for being such a good neighbour to our Church in locking and unlocking the Church each day for the builders and therefore saving me a round trip of three miles twice a day.

I am afraid we may still be some way off being able to hold services in our lovely church but in the meantime a walk around our churchyard to see the spring bulbs appearing really gladdens the heart. The photo below was taken in March so don't expect to see quite such a wonderful display quite



yet but there is a lot to look forward to. Wyn Jones who loves to spend time helping to look after the churchyard has planted many bulbs and shrubs over the past few years so that when spring finally arrives we have a riot of colour to look forward to. Many thanks are also due to Wyn for all that he does throughout the year.

Stay safe everyone and we shall all look forward to the time when we can once again meet one another in our lovely church.

Elsie Latham

Llanvapley News

The last service to be held in **Llanvapley Church** was on 22nd November. Services planned for 13th December, Christmas Day, 10th January and 24th January were all cancelled due to the changing nature of the pandemic.

However, it hasn't all been quiet as the bell was rung on Christmas Day and also on New Year's Eve (see picture on the right which was taken at the stroke of midnight). The church is of course closed at all times but it still needs looking after. The Church would like to thank James Lowes for offering to remove the winter debris from the gutters. James runs a professional cleaning service but is delighted to do the gutters every year free of charge. The Church has been advised by our insurers to keep an eye on the building during this quiet time and to make sure it is ready to be used whenever this will be possible.



Following a recent check we are delighted to find the building in good shape although a little 'sad'! Thanks also go to Blackwood Fire Services who visited the church in January to perform the annual fire safety check which is required by Ecclesiastical Insurance.

On 3rd February SSE Business Energy will be visiting the church to install a **smart meter**. The meter will enable the company to provide better energy supply to all customers which will reduce blackouts. It will also eliminate manual monthly meter readings which means less work for the church committee.

Was it yew? One of the most common questions asked by visitors to Llanvapley Church is 'how old is the church?' This is a very difficult question to answer as the church has changed over the centuries. However, thanks to an unknown person we are now able to reliably give the age of our most famous tree in our churchyard. In December a label appeared on the yew tree (*Taxus Baccata*) on the



north side of the church. The tree has survived for over four centuries and in 1621 it would have survived a severe winter in which rivers were frozen, it snowed for 13 days and flocks of sheep were lost. Anyone know who put the label on the tree?

Community Councillor, Pat Bolwell

would like to thank everyone who sent in their comments to the consultation about a 20mph speed limit in the village. The comments have been collated and passed on to County Councillor Sara Jones and to council officers.

The condition of the roads is also a point of discussion for many people in the village. It is hoped the council will be able to examine the problems which have been notified. These include poor road surfaces and blocked drainage. Llanvapley residents will be pleased to see an end to recent road closures in the village which have been necessitated by essential work to water and communication systems.



The **Llanvapley Sports and Social Association** committee will be meeting virtually on Friday 5th February. Despite the lockdown there is a lot to talk about and plans for 2021 will be discussed. The LSSA would like to thank James Lowes for cleaning the new gutters on the pavilion.

Orchard Acre Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) After a festive pause for rest and family time over Christmas, it's back to work at Orchard Acre. As we will be supplying our first veg boxes to our members from June (for 25 weeks) this year the work to have those veggies ready starts now. This January we have been busy finalising our crop plan and getting in our seed orders, which is always exciting; each seed packet holding all the promise and potential for the year ahead. But this year that excitement has been tempered by the challenge of sourcing interesting and organic



vegetable seed. With seed supply in such high demand and few producers in the UK most suppliers are closing their tills except for short windows of time every few days or weeks in some cases. Luckily we've managed to get most of what we need but the combination of Covid and Brexit (plus the exciting upsurge in interest in growing vegetables) is a big challenge for suppliers, many of whom are small scale growers themselves. It's a reminder of the fragility of our current seed supply in the UK which has a direct impact on the quality and diversity of the food system as a whole.

Local Seed Swap If any home gardeners are interested in sourcing local seeds for the coming season, there will be an online 'Seedy Sunday' event on 28th Feb, 2-3pm run by Abergavenny Transition Towns with seeds available to swap and then collect at a centralised point, all socially distanced of course. We will be giving a presentation about Orchard Acre at this event. Book for free here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/lock-down-seedy-sunday-abergavenny>

We will also be speaking at this **local food webinar**: Looking for new opportunities? Local food demand is growing fast, meet the farmers leading the way. Wednesday 10th Feb, 1pm-2.30pm. Webinar run by Our Food Crickhowell. <https://www.facebook.com/events/238723657722883>

Back in our garden, (with the help of a few local volunteers) we have most of this season's veg beds built and tucked up under tarps, giving time for the soil life to continue its work protected from the elements, integrating the compost we have added and adding valuable organic matter into the system to feed those soil organisms. We will remove the tarps from March onwards, topping up the compost on each bed before we begin to plant out our crops.

In the past week, our apple trees have been pruned and compost heaps have been built. Layers of straw (the last left over from our wedding!) wood chip, chicken muck and kitchen scraps have been piled high and covered and over the next 6 months a host of bacteria, nematodes, arthropods and other soil beasties will do what they do so well and break this down into a rich and fertile compost for next year's crops.



We have places left for this seasons Orchard Acre CSA vegetable boxes, so if you would like to sign up or for more information please email orchardacremarketgarden@gmail.com You can also find us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/orchard.acre>

Llanvetherine News

The Annual Church Draw for St James will take place when restrictions allow.

Current restrictions also led to the cancellation of the annual **New Year's Day Walk**.

There's now a **daily local milk delivery service** - using glass not plastic that delivers to Llanvetherine. Find out more by clicking on this link <http://bit.ly/2NVcL1H> There's an easy to use App and they deliver free range eggs and juice too. *Sarah Dickens*

TNT would like to send congratulations to **Kate Beavan**, (who appears on the cover of TNT) who has been honoured with an MBE for her services to agriculture. In the citation it said *'Kate Beavan from Abergavenny, has been awarded an MBE for her services to agriculture. The farmer is also a lecturer in animal health and conservation, a mental health first aider and was county chair for the National Farmer's Union. She has been lecturing in animal health for more than 20 years and promotes women in farming. Passionate about all things rural, farming and environment, she has been the resident farming expert on BBC's Lambing Live and The One Show and a Health and Welfare expert for Channel 4's Crufts. She gives seasonal classes in shearing, sheep husbandry, lambing and cider making as part of her Kate's Country School. It has given other women and 'urban dwellers' the confidence to enter into the farming community and has been hailed as a success'*

Kate and her husband Jim farm in Llanvetherine. Kate hails from Lancashire and moved to Abergavenny from Lancashire to work at Abbey Vets. She then joined Abergavenny YFC where she met Jim. Kate is knowledgeable, supportive and imparts her knowledge confidently and happily making the listener feel supported, interested and involved whilst also wanting to know more. Kate has also worked as local rep for Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution fighting the case for farmers in need and actively fundraising.

When asked by TNT about being given a MBE Kate said *'Has taken me a while to get my head around it and I'm still not sure I deserve it but it has made us smile.'* Kate is a champion for agriculture and rural life via her Twitter account. Pictures of life on her Llanvetherine farm are regularly seen by over 11,000 followers on Twitter. In a recent post Kate said *'Had an early start, 1200 ewes having their ultrasound scans today. Epynt Hardy Speckled averaged at 165% (av 1.65 lambs per ewe). Happy with that.'* Well done Kate on your award as a Member of the British Empire. We are happy with that!

Penrhos News

Penrhos, like all of our villages, is quiet at the moment - very quiet in fact. This is probably because people aren't doing anything but it does seem that there are a few ladies in our village who have been vaccinated which is great news. The Penrhos rainfall data for last year has just come in and it may just cheer everyone up! The rainfall for 2020 was 1150 mm which is 46 inches, compared to 2019 which was 1089mm = 43 inches. Storm Christof has dropped 50.8mm (2 inches) in the last 2 days.

Richard Price

Gardening Thoughts February 21

The pandemic is still raging and those of us who are lucky and have gardens can get stuck in and try to forget what is going on elsewhere for an hour or two at least. I have had a good day pruning roses and tying up those that are growing against the house, cutting back salvias and sedums and generally giving the garden a bit of a tidy up. I have also been attacking celandine which has already sprouted. Digging them up is the only way to get rid of them. If you do not know what celandine look like, they have pretty star like yellow flowers (don't be fooled they are a menace) with rounded leaves and when you dig them up they reveal a clump of tiny potato like tubers. Celandines flower in early spring and can be found in local woods (the best place for them) alongside white wood anemones.



The star in the garden at the moment is *Melianthus Major* or Giant Honey Bush. It is from the genus *Melianthaceae*, a Native from South Africa which also grows well in Australia and New Zealand but it is hardier than first thought and my plant has survived even the coldest winters. Its feathery glaucous blue leaves are so exotic and stay looking good for months on end. I cut ours back to the ground in early spring, but you can leave it and you may get some flower heads in April or



May, which appear on slightly woody stems. They are tall, rather like over large floppy lupins in a coppery red. Our shrub is now about 8 feet across and to stop it from monopolising the entire flower bed I usually get my spade in and dig up a few rooted bits to give to friends. This is the easiest way to propagate this plant, but it does come from seed sown in an incubator. It grows in any good gardening soil and seems to be disease free. Monty Don says it smells of Peanut butter though I am not so sure. The only thing against it is that the leaves, roots and flowers are all poisonous.

Another star at the moment is Sarcococca, sweet box or Christmas Box. I think our bush is S. hookerana. It has very fragrant flowers which are out now and fill a room if you pick a few sprigs. The leaves are slender, pointed and evergreen and are happy to be clipped so it can be kept neat and tidy.

Church Services February 2021

Church services in all our four churches have been cancelled until current restrictions are relaxed.

Dates for your calendar

Shrove Tuesday - 16th February

Ash Wednesday is the beginning of Lent - 17th February

Good Friday - 2nd April

Easter Sunday - 4th April

The New Times continues to be published in digital format only during the pandemic. It is available online on our website by clicking on the link for 'News'. It is delivered to 175 people on the email list. Please contact TNT if you are not on the list or if you know of someone who would like to be included. Past copies of TNT going back to 2007 are all available on our website at <https://llantiliogroup.info/tnt-archive/>

THE NEW TIMES
AUGUST 2007
PENRHOS
LLANTILIO CROSSENNY
LLANVETHERINE
LLANVAPLEY

SERVICES IN AUGUST

Sunday 5 th August	09.30am Llanvetherine 11.00am Llantilio Crosseenny
Sunday 12 th August	09.30am Penrhos 11.00am Llanvapley
Sunday 19 th August	09.30am Llanvetherine 11.00am Llantilio Crosseenny
Sunday 26 th August	09.30am Penrhos

You can keep in touch with what is happening in our church communities via our website www.llantiliogroup.info

Our website has the latest news, links to online resources for worship as well as information about all our churches.

We are also on Twitter [@LlantilioG](https://twitter.com/LlantilioG)

*Contributions for the March issue of TNT by 20th February 2021
Please send your emails to lestaylor.taylor@gmail.com*