

BRO YSTUMANNER NEWS

January 2024 Volume 30, No 1

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Journeying into the Unknown

When someone is walking beside us, we have more courage to walk into the unknown and to risk the dark and messy places in our journey.' Karen Kimsey-House

As 2023 draws to a close, we ride over the hill from one year to the next not knowing what lies on the other side. This is a truth we all know in our heads. However, the reality of it does not often become embedded in our hearts until something happens in our lives that impacts on us, or our loved ones.

Then we wake up once again to the fact that not only *the* future is unknown, but *our* future is unknown! Each moment is a discovery and a surprise that cannot be predicted or known for certain.

Life is an adventure with many wonders and blessings to behold and experience, but also populated by bogs and cliffs that often make the journey arduous and difficult. Yet the message of the Christmas story that brings light to the end of the year, also provides a light for us to carry with us on our journey into the New Year. We do not have to journey alone!

When Mary was first told by the angel Gabriel that she would conceive and bear a son, he said, 'The Lord is with you!' When facing the speculation of her family and community, she found a welcome and understanding in her visit to her older relative Elizabeth, who also found herself unexpectedly with child despite her old age. Joseph and Mary then travelled together to Bethlehem. On the night of Jesus' birth, the shepherds experienced the unexpected appearance and message of the angels, encouraging them to say to each other, 'Let *us* go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' Then after the visit of the magi, who journeyed together to see the new king, Joseph and Mary fled with baby Jesus to Egypt to escape the wrath of Herod.

Although life kept throwing up the unexpected, each individual set out into the uncertainty of the unknown knowing the companionship and support of those travelling with them. The scariness of facing the unknown is fully acknowledged with the angelic refrain, 'Do not be afraid', punctuating the story at regular intervals. Yet the assurance that we need never be alone in our journey is affirmed in the name given to Jesus – Emmanuel – God with us. This is the light we see burning brightly at the heart of the Christmas story, and the light we carry into a new year. God sent his Son into the world to be with us.

Living and dying as a human being, Jesus knows and understands our human frailties, fears, and frustrations, yet he faced the worst life could throw at him, even death and abandonment, so that we might never have to be alone.

In the past year our family have been blessed with the support, encouragement and prayers of others travelling with us through difficult times. It has meant so much to us, bringing light and comfort to dark moments, joy and laughter in the midst of uncertainty, and the continual assurance of God's love and presence with us.

As we step into a new year, we should never underestimate the importance of taking the time to travel alongside others. It can make all the difference in the world to them. As we journey with each other, we should also not forget the message of Christmas – the gift of Emmanuel – God with us!

May you know the blessing of many companions to brighten your journey, and let the love and light of Jesus Christ, Emmanuel – God with us, lead you through the coming year,

Rev. Ruth Hansford

Around Bro Ystumanner

Planning for the Future

Since Ministry Areas were first formed, it has been envisaged that each Ministry Area will have three Development Plans covering Mission, Property, and Finance. The aim is to help us assess what we have in terms of opportunities, resources, and needs across our communities, congregations, and buildings. Then we decide together how we can best use what we have to fulfil the ministry and mission we believe God is calling us to in Bro Ystumanner Ministry Area. This will allow us to go forward in a way that considers the needs and opportunities in each church and community, and enables us as a Church family to support, encourage, and develop the mission and ministry of our different and diverse churches in a way that is sustainable, but also willing to step out in faith as we seek to worship God, grow the Church, and love the world.

Setting up these plans has happened in some Ministry Areas in the diocese, but not in others. The Archdeacon reported at our last Synod meeting that in 2024 those Ministry Areas still on that journey will be encouraged and supported in having plans drafted by the end of the year. So may I encourage you to think and pray about what our priorities should be across these different areas as we continue to witness to God's love and presence. Thank you.

Rev. Ruth

Reaching Out To Children

On Wednesday mornings in term time a small group goes to Ysgol Penybryn, Tywyn, to act out a bible story for the children. This is using the Open the Book / Agor y Llyfr system now organised by the Bible Society. It includes a short introduction and ending. Everything is scripted so those involved and the school know exactly what is to be said. We tell the story in English although a Welsh version is also available. Infants and Juniors have the story in alternate weeks.

We meet at school at 8.30 am on the Wednesday mornings and normally leave by 9.40. Every second week we then move to the leader's house to plan the next week's story (and for a cup of tea/coffee).

We should very much like some additional volunteers. If you would be interested to know more about it, please contact Meryl Gover (710135). A DBS certificate is needed which can be arranged through St Cadfan's Church. Volunteers are welcome from any Christian denomination.

Even if you do not think this is for you, please would you pray that new volunteers will come forward to help.

Thank you. Meryl

2024 Newsletter Subscription

The newsletter is an important way of sharing information about our services, what's going on in our churches and communities, and what we are doing and where we are going in our life and ministry together. Thank you to everyone who contributes items, and do consider whether you have something you could share about Church, faith, or community. We currently have 180 people receiving the newsletter by email and over 100 receiving printed copies, so there is a wide readership.

Newsletter Subscription for 2024 now due

If you would like to receive a printed copy of the newsletter every month in 2024, we would be grateful if you could fill in the subscription form on the back page and give it, with your payment, to your churchwarden or church representative, or send it to Sarah Taylor as detailed on the form.

The cost of the newsletter is staying the same at 50p per copy. Therefore, if you have a 12 month subscription, it will cost £6.00 for 12 copies. Unfortunately, for those who receive it by post, the cost of postage has increased again, so costs to cover the stamps have also increased (see subscription form for details). If you are able to send us 12×2^{nd} class stamps, we can use them regardless of any further increases in price.

Thank you!

Monthly Prayer Walk – Skirting Talyllyn Lake Thursday 25th January PLEASE NOTE LATER DATE THAN USUAL! 10.00 am Meeting at Tyn-y-Cornel

At some point every winter, we enjoy a stroll along the relatively level track round the far side of Talyllyn Lake taking in the beautiful views and the fresh air. So in January you are invited to take a little drive up to Talyllyn Lake and park at Tyn-y-Cornel, where we will return to warm up and have lunch together after the walk. During the walk we will stop periodically to hear a poem or a Bible reading and say some prayers, but there is no requirement to pray yourself unless you would like to. If you need a lift, do please get in touch with Rev. Ruth (see Contacts page). Everyone is welcome!

Grant Me Thy Peace

Elizabeth Crannell

Lord, through the coming year I make no plea For wealth or power; neither that of grief I have no portion; but where'er I be, Grant me Thy peace!

I ask not that my days shall pleasure know: Nor that from sorrow I shall find relief; In hours of joy, in hours of pain or woe, Grant me Thy peace!

If storm-clouds lower, if the sky be gray And lightnings rift the air; if stormy seas Threaten to me engulf, dear Lord, I pray, Grant me Thy peace!

If those I trust deny me, or betray, Till sorrow's chalice holds but bitter lees; If hopes, long cherished, fail me by the way, Grant me Thy peace!

If joy bids fair to be my welcome guest Lest I forget oh, leave me not alone; But let my happy heart have added zest; Grant me Thy peace!

That peace which passeth understanding, give. A peace which deadens pain when hope hath flown In joy, in grief, whether I die or live, Grant me Thy peace!

Where Has The Church Gone Wrong?

Nigel Adams

Recently Celia and I 'attended' a funeral about 200 miles away via Zoom on the computer. It was the second time that we have done this – the first time was Celia's nephew's funeral in Texas but there was a huge difference. That was a Roman Catholic Requiem Mass with which we were 'at home' because the liturgy was very similar to the Anglican one in this country.

The recent one we attended was not recognisable as a funeral as we know it. As is increasingly the case in the U.K., it was led by a 'funeral celebrant' and there was no liturgy. The coffin had been placed in the crematorium chapel and music was played as people arrived and again as they walked out. Many mourners touched the coffin as they passed it when they were leaving.

The funeral lasted about 30 minutes and the vast majority of that time was taken up by the reading from the 'funeral celebrant' of what was essentially the deceased's life story as written by one of their daughters.

The person who had died was much loved by her family and friends but there was no element of thanksgiving for her life. There was no recognisable liturgy and/or prayers because it was not a Christian funeral.

Such funerals are very common now. I know someone who became a 'funeral celebrant' and he was regularly taking 5 or 6 funerals a week at the Crematorium in the place where he lived. The same applies to baptisms. Celia and I saw an 'advertising card' in a pub in Welshpool some time ago which advertised the services of a lady who called herself a 'baptism and funeral celebrant' the content of the leaflet specifically said that the ceremony could be exactly as the 'customer' wanted as distinct from the church or chapel where a liturgy **had** to be followed.

When Celia and I were ordained in 1988 it was not unusual for us to take 3 funerals each every week and our incumbents were doing the same. So we could be conducting about 12 funerals a week between the 4 of us and many of those were in church. The deceased person had often not been a churchgoer but our parishioners wanted their funerals, baptisms and weddings to be conducted by a cleric (Readers didn't conduct funerals then).

Likewise with baptisms. We used to have baptisms once a month on a Sunday afternoon and it wasn't unusual for us to have 3 every time. When I was Vicar of St. Mary's Abbey in Nuneaton I used to get about 25 weddings and 35 baptisms a year and about 3 funerals a week. Very few of these services are conducted in church now. Many parents think it is hypocritical for them to have their child baptised because they never go to church or because they say the child can make up their own mind about being a Christian when they are adults.

There aren't many people now who look on our churches as 'their parish church'. Churches and chapels are perceived as 'private worship clubs'. For years now the 'Church' has failed to 'meet people where they are.' In today's world in many families both parents work and weekends are 'family time' and rightly so. The children also have commitments like football, gymnastics and swimming classes. This isn't new. When George Carey was Archbishop of Canterbury he recognised this and suggested that we should do what many Roman Catholic churches still do and have the First Mass of Sunday on Saturday evening but his suggestion was totally ignored.

Surely we need to 'think outside the box.' We did this in Nuneaton. Our Sunday School attendance was abysmal for the reasons stated above so it isn't new. So I went to see the manager of Asda and asked if we could have Sunday School in their café. Not only did the manager agree, but she got us a grant from Asda to fund its start up. I asked my Roman Catholic and Free Church colleagues to join us and they did and we 'took it in turns' to lead it. We used to get 30-35 children per week.

They were not the same children each week but we were reaching children who weren't coming to 'traditional' Sunday School. Many of my congregation didn't agree with this initiative because it wasn't 'proper Sunday School' and they said that we were just 'child-minding' for parents who were shopping. That was true in a sense but, we 'thought outside the box' and it worked.

The 3 questions all this raises for me are:-

is it time to for all churches and chapels to 'think outside the box?'

Congregations in all denominations are dwindling everywhere and mainly consist of elderly people. There are very few children in churches and chapels. There are a few exceptions but, if we go on as we are, church and chapel closures are surely inevitable. We have seen it in this area already. But, sadly, the attitude of many church and chapel goers can be summed up by the person who, when asked what should be done to 'stop the rot' said 'Nothing! The church will see me out so I'm not worried!'

Hansford Family Update

It has been lovely to have Paul home since the end of November. He has been extremely tired, but is doing OK. He has just been down to Cardiff for an MRI (on Dec 18th) and we wait for those results to see how successful his treatment has been thus far. In the meantime, the treatment regime continues. They would normally start his 6 months chemotherapy 4 weeks after the end of the initial radio and chemotherapy. That would be Christmas Day! This involves taking tablets (at home) for 5 days and then having 23 days without. The dose is double what he had during his 6 weeks radio and chemotherapy, so more likely to cause nausea. Therefore, they have kindly said he can start the day after Boxing Day! We are looking forward to some downtime together as a family after Christmas (I'm back in work on Jan. 3rd), and hope that you also have time to be with family and friends over Christmas and the New Year!

Rev. Ruth

^{&#}x27;where have we gone so wrong?'

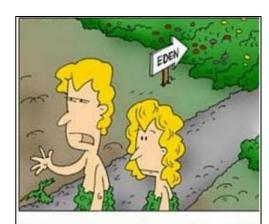
^{&#}x27;what are we doing about it?'



SPIRITUAL CLUTTER: Those 'urgent' items that keep us from intimacy with God. (tv, sports, recreation, movies, etc)



"Hurry! Our New Year's resolutions start in ten minutes."



OUR RESOLUTION LAST YEAR COULD HAVE BEEN "LESS FRUIT", BUT NO ... WE WENT WITH "TRUST PEOPLE MORE"



News from the Churches



Aberdyfi

For the fourth year running Aberdyfi has embraced the St Peter's Advent Windows initiative. As we go to print we have a Cefyl Mari Lwyd, a climbing

Santa, a Nativity scene, and eight maids a milking to name but a few......

Some households have taken part every year and each time the Windows bring Light and Joy to the village.

The Community spirit was also very much alive at the Christmas Community Lunch. Huge thanks to Kathy Rynn for organising this monthly event from October to Easter... bringing people from all cultures and churches together.

We look forward to our Christmas Services and continuing to be here for our Community.

Abergynolwyn

Thank you to everyone who helped to decorate the Church so beautifully. Our annual Carol Service on 10th December was very well attended and it was



wonderful to see the Church so full. Thank you very much to the Abergynolwyn Silver Band for providing a wonderful accompaniment to much loved carols.

We look forward to our Christmas Eve Service at 3pm which will be led by Nigel and Celia Adams.

Our final Service of the year will be a Morning Worship on New Year's Eve at 10:00.

We wish everyone a very Happy and healthy New Year.

Janet Wright



Arthog

A small band came together to decorate the church, so it looked suitably festive when a full church gathered to celebrate our Carol Service. Carols and readings ended with a glass of warm

ginger cordial, mince pies, chocolate biscuits, shortbread, and chocolates – a lovely occasion. We look forward to our Christmas Eve Communion at 11.30pm. The decorations will remain in place during the Christmas and Epiphany season to brighten the dark days of January and our Evening Prayer service at 3.00pm on Sunday 21st January.

As we begin a new year, I would like to extend my thanks to all those who have supported St Catherine's in many different ways during the first year since its reopening at the end of November 2022. We are still in the process of developing our worship and ministry at St Catherine's, so please do say if there are specific things you would like to see happening. In the coming year, we hope to relaunch the Friends of St Catherine's Church and start tackling some of the repairs required on the building, so your continued help and support will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you to you all, Rev. Ruth

Fairbourne

The church, once again looked festive with the decorated tree, flowers and a Nativity scene.

We were treated to an All Age Carol Service by the children from Aftershock and the Ark.

Christmas Morning will be welcomed in with a family Eucharist, and as usual, the deacon will sport a Christmas jumper.



What will the next 12 months bring us, not only as a church but also a community, who knows? But whatever lies in store for us and with God's grace and guidance, I'm sure we will embrace it with open arms or meet any challenge head on.

As always, if you or you know of anyone who would like our prayers, pastoral support or home communion, please do get in touch.

Rev George

Llanegryn



There were sweets galore at out Christingle Workshop at Neuadd Egryn on December 9th. Small hands made quick work of making and decorating the Christingles for our Christingle Service up at the

church that evening. It was very special to stand around the font with the church lit only by our Christingles and a few other candles giving thanks for the promise of the rainbow, assuring us of God's love and presence with us, and praying that children facing dark times in their lives may find hope and light.

We were blessed with dry weather for the Village Carol Singing organised by Neuadd Egryn and a very tuneful band walked through the village serenading the villagers with a selection of carols followed by a well-earned mug of mulled wine and some much-appreciated refreshments at the Neuadd. Now we look forward to our Christmas Eve Communion Service at the church at 9.30pm.

Nadolig Llawen a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda!

In January we will be back to our regular routine of two services a month at 11.15am on the 2nd and 4th Sundays. Everyone is welcome!

Llanfihangel y Pennant

A few of us enjoyed a lovely Ministry Area Advent Carol Service on Advent Sunday celebrating the coming of the Light. Those able to stay for refreshments enjoyed a warm drink of ginger and lemongrass cordial, mince pies, and biscuits.

With a few slates that have slipped or gone astray, there is some work to do to correct a couple of leaks, so thank you to both locals and visitors who support St Michael's, Llanfihangel-y-Pennant, so that we can keep this lovely little church open and available for all to visit and use.

Llwyngwril



Our Christmas Market was a great success and we made £604.52 before expenses.

The church was beautifully decorated by members of the congregation and it was nice to wish everyone a

merry Christmas with a glass of wine and a mince pie at the end of the Crib Service.

On Christmas Eve we will hold our annual candlelit service at the old church in Llangelynnin when approximately 100 people will sing carols and listen to readings.

St Celynnin's will be open on Christmas Eve for people to come in and look at the decorations and have a quiet moment to meditate.

We wish everyone a peaceful and happy Christmas and a healthy New Year

Pennal

A very wet and windy December started with a splendid concert by the Machynlleth Wind Band and The Dyfi Singers - both of whom seemed to be on the musical form that demanded performance on



national stages. The audience certainly showed their profound appreciation, and mulled wine at half time was equally appreciated and enjoyed. Hopefully this annual fixture will in future be supported by a wider audience, and certainly audience members from a number of other venues have expressed hopes for a similar concert next year.

Then a week later we held our first Plygain for many years. Originally an annual event held in the church at 6.00 am on Christmas morning (mid nineteenth to mid twentieth centuries) this was a first return, and another thoroughly appreciative congregation showed their great support. Rev Kath Rogers beautifully led us, the Dyfi Singers sung again, as did Plygain quartets and trios and solos, and the congregation sung carols boldly, and also enjoyed mulled wine afterwards.

The evening was organised by our Ding Dong Team who announced that their target of raising money to repair the Village Clock would that evening be reached, and so now their efforts will be aimed at repairing our church east wall.

The next day the pupils of Ysgol Corris and Ysgol Pennal spent all day in the church practising, and then in the evening entertained a full house of their parents and grandparents and wider families to a wonderful evening of Christmas worship and song. Ysgol Pennal returns for their Christingle at the end of the week.

And then Christmas - hopefully a bit drier, a bit lighter, but as usual full of great tidings and joy - and some world peace.

Hugh Ramsbotham

Tywyn



At the time of writing this, St. Cadfan's is facing a catalogue of repair and renovation jobs. Largest of these is, of course, the Vestry floor, but we also have to replace a downspout on the tower, repair a window in the North Aisle, resolve some water

damage to the organ (once the tower is sorted out), and obtain a faculty for removal of the now redundant (and partly unusable) choir stalls. Faced with all this, it is easy to forget what the church is there for, which is to provide a place and focus for the worship of Almighty God, and to welcome Jesus into our hearts as we approach Christmas. To remind ourselves of what we are all about, we have a busy series of services over Christmas, which started with an enjoyable Nine Lessons and Carols on Sunday 18th, to be followed by Christmas Eve Communion at 11.30pm, and another celebration of Holy Communion on Christmas Day itself.

The concert given by the Cassiopeia String Quartet on the 13th of December was a great success. Four gifted young players, all students at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, entertained a larger-than-expected audience with an immaculate performance of works by Mozart and Beethoven. The warm tones of the strings, in the fine acoustics of St. Cadfan's, made for a truly memorable evening and the audience clearly

enjoyed the experience, to judge by the amount of applause. We would very much like to welcome the quartet back again at some time.

We can all pray that throughout all the building matters, and with the help of music and the Word of God, we can enter 2024 confident in the power of the Gospel to make real difference to people's lives.

Eco Ystumanner

This month, may I simply direct your attention to the A Rocha website, and suggest that you take a look at the Prayer Diary, which will give you plenty of pointers for prayer, particularly in the wake of COP28, a conference which has generated plenty of heat and accusations of greenwashing, but perhaps some hopeful signs as well?

https://arocha.org.uk/get-involved/pray/

Max Birchenough

Cleaning in St Cadfan's

The cleaning of St Cadfan's is an ongoing task which never stops. With the onset of windy wintery weather the daily fall of dust and 'dandruff' (i.e. flecks of plaster and limewash) is considerable. Now that the lighting has been so much improved (many thanks to Meryl) we can see even better where the cleaning is needed.

Cleaning normally happens on a Friday morning at 10 am. Any help, on a regular or occasional basis, would be very welcome. All tools and materials are provided.

If you feel able to help in any way please sign up on the list beside the Vestry door, or call Paul Inman (07980 374770 or 711633).



Crafts for Giving

Monday 8th January 2.00-4.00pm, St Cadfan's Church, Tywyn



We greet the new year with our yarn and needles, hot drinks and biscuits as we make things to give to individuals and organisations.

If you can't get to be with us and you need patterns, materials or equipment - or indeed if you have suggestions about who might appreciate a Prayer Shawl or lap blanket - please contact Mrs Sue Whitehouse or Rev. Ruth Hansford (see Contacts).



A warm welcome for everyone!



Dates for your Diary

Jan	8	Crafts for Giving	2-4pm	St Cadfan's,
0 0022				Tywyn
	12	Aberdyfi Community Lunch	12.30pm	Neuadd Dyfi,
				Aberdyfi
	23	Churchwardens and	7pm	St Cadfan's,
		Treasurers' meeting		Tywyn
	25	Monthly Prayer Walk	10am	Tyn-y-Cornel,
				Talyllyn Lake
	26	Golden Girls Get Together	12.30pm	The WhiteHall
		_		Tywyn
Feb	6	Ministry Area Council	7pm	St Cadfan's,
		-		Tywyn

<u>Deadline</u> for the February Newsletter Wednesday 17th January 2023

Instructions for sending items for the February newsletter:

Please email or post items to Lee Taylor: foxeshome@sky.com Bethany House, College Green, Tywyn, Gwynedd LL36 9BY

For emails, please put 'February Newsletter', and nothing else, in the Subject Line.

Services in January

Midweek Services

Wednesdays 10.30am Holy Communion St Cadfan's, Tywyn (January 17th – Followed by Prayers for Healing and Wholeness)

Sunday 7t	h January – Epiphany			
9.30am	All Age Worship	St Celynnin's, Llwyngwril		
10am	Morning Worship	St Peter ad Vincula, Pennal		
10am	Holy Communion	St David's, Abergynolwyn		
11am	Morning Worship	St Cynon's, Fairbourne		
11.15am	United Service in the	English Chapel, Aberdyfi		
	English Chapel			
11.15am	Holy Communion	St Cadfan's, Tywyn		
Thursday	11th January			
7pm	Plygain	St David's, Abergynolwyn		
Sunday 14	lth January – Second Sun	day of Epiphany		
10am	Holy Communion	St Peter ad Vincula, Pennal		
11.15am	Holy Communion	St Mary & St Egryn, Llanegryn		
11.15am	Holy Communion	St Peter's, Aberdyfi		
11.15am	Morning Worship	St Cadfan's, Tywyn		
Sunday 21	lst January – Third Sund	ay of Epiphany		
9.30am	Holy Communion	St Celynnin's, Llwyngwril		
10am	Morning Worship	St Peter ad Vincula, Pennal		
10am	Morning Worship	St David's, Abergynolwyn		
11am	Holy Communion	St Cynon's, Fairbourne		
11.15am	Holy Communion	St Peter's, Aberdyfi		
11.15am	Holy Communion	St Cadfan's, Tywyn		
3pm	Evening Prayer	St Catherine's, Arthog		
Sunday 28th January – The Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Candlemas)				
9.30am	Morning Worship	St Celynnin's, Llwyngwril		
10am	Morning Worship	St Peter ad Vincula, Pennal		
11.15am	Morning Worship	St Mary & St Egryn, Llanegryn		
11.15am	Holy Communion	St Peter's, Aberdyfi		
11.15am	Holy Communion	St Cadfan's, Tywyn		
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We look forward to welcoming you to our churches!

Please safeguard your health and the health of others and do not attend a service if you have symptoms of coronavirus or have a positive test.

Hand sanitiser and masks are provided in our churches.

Thank you for your support and your consideration of others.

Contacts

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	-		
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	John Vaughan Jones	01654 712116	
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Newsletter Subscriptions for 2024 Now Due

Subscriptions for Bro Ystumanner News are now due. As always, to comply with the Data Protection rules, a request to receive the newsletter indicates your consent for your contact details, as appropriate, to be held in our records.

<u>Newsletter - by Email - free of charge</u> (but donations welcomed)

If you already receive the newsletter by email, and are happy to continue, you don't need to do anything.

To start receiving copies by email please let Rev. Ruth know by emailing: ruthhansford@esgobaethbangor.net

<u>To receive a Paper Copy</u> please complete the form below and hand it, with your payment, to your churchwarden, or send it to Mrs Sarah Taylor (Bethany House, College Green, Tywyn, Gwynedd LL36 9BY).

Cheques should be made payable to 'Bro Ystumanner Ministry Area'

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For Newsletters posted by Royal Mail:

I would like my newsletter to be posted to me and I enclose (tick one):

• Payment of £6.00 plus 12 x 2nd-class stamps (*preferred*) (giving stamps reduces losses due to price increases during the year)

or

• Payment of £15.00 (£6.00 plus £9.00 for postage costs)