



Taff Wenallt Ministry Area

July 2025 Newsletter

'À Dieu!', 'God b'-wi'-ye!', 'Farewell', 'Auf Wiedersehen!'



' God be with you till we meet again '

God be with you till we meet again; by His counsels guide, uphold you,
With His sheep securely fold you; God be with you till we meet again.

God be with you till we meet again; 'neath His wings securely hide you,
Daily manna still provide you; God be with you till we meet again.

God be with you till we meet again; when life's perils thick confound you,
Put His arms unfailing round you; God be with you till we meet again.

God be with you till we meet again; keep love's banner floating o'er you,
Smite death's threatening wave before you; God be with you till we meet again.

Jeremiah E. Rankin, 1828-1904

'God Be With You Till We Meet Again', by Jeremiah Rankin, the minister for the First Congregational Church in Washington, D.C., was composed in 1882 simply so that his church choir could have something to sing when they parted each week! Rankin wrote the first stanza of the song in response to reading the etymology of 'good-bye' in a dictionary and learned that it was short for 'God be with you.' The hymn originally consisted of eight verses, but the four quoted above are the ones most often printed in hymnbooks.

The hymn became the official closing song for the Christian Endeavor Convention. Dr. Rankin said: 'It has had no sweeter recognition than that given by its adoption by the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor. Long, long, may they sing it!'

During the World Wars, many postcards were printed with hymn lyrics to give solace and encouragement to soldiers going into battle. One such postcard printed the words of the last verse with a colourful picture of soldiers at the battle front.

Perhaps some readers will remember, as I do, singing the hymn at end-of-term school assemblies before we broke up for the summer holidays. In the 50s and 60s, memories of World War 2, 'a war to end all wars' (*I wish!*) were still vivid and raw, and many pupils would have had personal experience of parting and the loss of those dear to them. Our knowledge of the recent past history meant that future security and certainty could no longer be taken for granted. This gave a particular poignancy to our singing. Often, as we sang, many of us were in tears.

The Clergy are always available for the Ministry of Reconciliation and Healing and the administration of the Sacrament to the sick and housebound.

MA Leader:	Canon John Davis	johndavis@cinw.org.uk	02920 626072
Vicars:	Rev'd Peter Mortimer	petermortimer@cinw.org.uk	02920 650883
	Rev'd Anna Harwood	revdannaharwood@gmail.com	07564 012412
	Rev'd Andrew Highway	office@twma.church	02920 624115
Assistant Curate:	Rev'd Henry Grover	henrygrover@cinw.org.uk	02920 624115

FAO those of you with internet access:

Our website address is:

www.twma.church

At **10.00am** on **Sundays** and **Thursdays**, services are streamed live from St Mary's.

You can watch them at

www.youtube.com/@TWMA.church/streams

For enquiries about the Calling of Banns, Weddings, Baptisms, and Church Hall Bookings:
the email address is: office@twma.church

The Taff Wenallt Ministry Area telephone contact number is 02920 624115

Or you can write to:

**The Taff Wenallt Ministry Area Office,
The Rectory, 6, Penlline Road, Whitchurch, Cardiff. CF14 2AD**



Pentecost TWMA Combined Service in All Saints' Llandaff North

from +Mary, Bishop of Llandaff:

Celebrating Pentecost across the Diocese

Pentecost is often called the birthday of the Church, because it's the day the followers of Jesus were empowered by the Holy Spirit to begin their public ministry. It marks the first time the Holy Spirit was poured out on all believers, fulfilling Jesus's promise that they would receive 'power from on high'. (*St Luke chapter 24, verse 49*).

Pentecost signals the beginning of the Church's mission to spread the Gospel to all nations, a mission that continues today.

Pentecost celebrations across the Diocese have reflected our rich diversity through different languages, cultures, traditions, and styles of worship, but they have also powerfully highlighted our shared faith and common purpose.

Citizen Church commissioned seventy-three new ministries with Lay Pastoral Assistants, Worship and Service leaders. Catechists were sent out in the power of the Spirit. United by the same Spirit that first filled the disciples, we stood together as one Church, renewed in mission, bound by love, and sent forth to carry the Good News into the world.

'Parthians, Medes, Elamites, dwellers in Mesopotamia . . . ' (Acts, chapter 2, verse 9)

At St Michael & All Angels in the Ministry Area of Roath & Cathays, they demonstrated the tongues of fire that came down on the disciples at Pentecost by having the Lord's Prayer said in twelve different languages: Yoruba, Welsh, Spanish, Somali, Latin, Korean, Japanese, Ibo, Hebrew, German, and French . . . before culminating in English!

Churches the length and breadth of the Diocese celebrated Pentecost on Sunday with everything from cakes, pizza parties, and even some real doves!

Thank you so much to everyone who shared their Pentecost pictures and stories with us.



*Come down, O Love Divine, seek Thou this soul of mine
and visit it with Thine own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near, within my heart appear,
and kindle it, Thy holy flame bestowing.*

Word Search

*'Go and **make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the **name** of the **Father** and of the **Son** and of the **Holy Spirit**, teaching them to **observe** all things that I commanded you. Behold, I am with you **always**, even to the end of the age.'*

St Matthew chapter 28, verses 19 & 20

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

Corpus Christi

*'For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup,
you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.'*

[1 Corinthians 11, v.26]

The **Feast of Corpus Christi**,* known in the Anglican Church as **Thanksgiving for the Gift of Holy Communion**, is celebrated on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday.

Offertory Hymn

In bread we bring You, Lord, our body's labour.
In wine we offer You our spirit's grief.
We do not ask You, ' Lord, who is my neighbour? '
But stand united now in one belief.
Oh, we have gladly heard Your word, Your holy word,
And now in answer, Lord, our gifts we bring.
Our selfish hearts make true, our failing faith renew.
Our lives belong to You, our Lord and King.

The bread we offer You is blessed and broken,
And it becomes for us our spirit's food.
Over the cup we bring, Your word is spoken;
Make it Your gift to us, Your healing blood.
Take all that daily toil plants in our hearts' poor soil;
Take all we start and spoil, each hopeful dream;
The chances we have missed, the graces we resist,
Lord, in Thy Eucharist take – and redeem.

*Words and music by **Monsignor Kevin Nichols** (1929 – 2006).*

Msg Kevin Nichols was a priest of the diocese of Hexham and Newcastle for over fifty years. Born in Wallsend on Tyneside in December 1929, he studied at Cambridge [*tutored by C.S. Lewis*] and Liverpool Universities, and taught in schools and Colleges of Education in England, and at the Catholic University of America. He served as National Advisor for Religious Education in England and Wales, and was for many years a member of the ICEL (*International Commission on English in the Liturgy*). He published widely in the field of religious education, but is perhaps best known as the author of several hymns.

'In bread we bring You, Lord', was sung at his funeral in 2006. * (*Lit. 'The Body of Christ'*)

The uncomfortable honesty of: *'Take all we start and spoil, each hopeful dream;
The chances we have missed, the graces we resist:'*
gives us no wriggle-room, no place to hide, from our need to face up to the *' manifold
sins and wickednesses which we from time to time most grievously have committed '*
and from which Jesus alone can redeem us. [*Editor*]



A Fond Farewell to Fr Benedict

On Sunday 15th June we said goodbye to Fr Benedict, as he prepares to move on and join the clergy team in Llandaff Cathedral.



It has been a pleasure to see how Benedict's ministry has enhanced the teaching and worship in our Ministry Area over the past three years of his curacy.



He arrived in the middle of a global pandemic and immediately joined in with our online worship and Zoom services.



Then, as we all gradually emerged from Lockdown, we got to meet him, his wife, Rosie, and children John and Lucy, as they became part of our Taff Wenallt churches.



Benedict is an excellent teacher, preacher and liturgist, and we have all benefitted from his presence in our Ministry Area Clergy Team. He has a great sense of humour and will be enormously missed here in Taff Wenallt as he moves on to the Mother Church of our Diocese.



We wish him every success in his future ministry. Benedict goes with our love, our prayers and our gratitude for his ministry amongst us.



With love and prayers.

Fr John.



' MUS ' WORD-ASSOCIATION QUIZ Questions

1	Gas and cress. (7)	
2	Brer Rabbit's uncle and Romulus's twin. (5)	
3	Wild horse bred by Ford! (7)	
4	First stove. (6)	
5	They were alive when Molly Malone sold them! (7)	
6	Feature of many seaside resorts. (9,6)	
7	Blind Cyclops who stole the Golden Fleece. (10)	
8	Island in St Vincent and the Grenadines. (8)	
9	Masque by Dryden & Handel.(5)	
10	Deer, rat, Elon. (4)	
11	Thisbe's Midsummer swain. (7)	
12	East Lothian city . . . not where Molly sourced her wares. (11)	
13	British and Ashmolean. (6)	
14	Soil enriched by decayed plant and animal matter. (5)	
15	Singing furniture. (7,6)	
16	French philosopher, author, and dramatist. (5)	
17	WW2 dictator. (9)	
18	Pass. (6)	
19	What Mandelson thought was guacamole with his chips! (5,4)	
20	Heaney. (6)	
21	(Expensive!) suburban village in Haringey. (7,4)	
22	Distinguishes between alkali and acid. (6,4)	
23	Dumas counted three. (10)	
24	Soft tissue, not to be confused with 5! (6)	
25	Presumably Octavius's older brother? (8)	
26	Butter plain weave cotton fabric. (6)	
27	Scholarships or scholar! (7)	
28	Grape capital of Oman. (6)	
29	Psilocybin psychogenic funghi. (5,9)	
30	Calliope, Melpomene & sisters. (5)	
31	Duck. (7)	
32	Iberian sweet wine. (8)	
33	Muzzle-loaded long gun, with fife and drum. (6)	
34	What the Von Trapp family heard. (3,5,2,5)	
35	Initial stage of wine-making. It's essential! (4)	
36	Though Modest, he spent a night on the Bare Mountain! (10)	
37	Former Pakistan president. (9)	
38	17th Century Sultan of Ottoman Empire. (7)	
39	Spotted cowbane! (8,4)	
40	Potassium aluminum silicate hydroxide fluoride, aka mica! (9)	
41	Dry white wine from the Loire. (8)	
42	Philemon's one-time slave. (8)	

(Editor )

Typical!

The last two Newsletters have featured increasingly frantic pleas to Newsletter readers to put pen to paper (*sorry if that sounds somewhat passé, even quaintly old-fashioned, in the Age of the Internet!*) to contribute their own farewell messages of appreciation of our Ministry Area Leader, affectionately known by me as MALJohn (*with its vaguely theatrical overtones, though I'm not entirely sure why!*)

But despite my pleas, that page of the Newsletter remained obstinately blank - until today!


Don't get me wrong . . . many and unanimous have been the spontaneous **spoken** expressions of regret resounding throughout the Taff Wenallt Ministry Area ever since John announced his impending retirement in the pages of the March edition of the Newsletter. But until today readers have shown a uniform reluctance to commit their thoughts to print!

Just over a week ago, in despair, I took out my reporter's notebook at the St Mary's Thursday Coffee Morning and worked my way around the table imploring, demanding, threatening, *beseeking* those present to say *something* for me to print in the July Newsletter so that MALJohn could read, and perhaps realise, how highly his spiritual ministry and leadership of the TWMA community are recognised and valued by us all. (*The results of that research begin at the bottom of the page.*)

Typically, this very morning, Saturday, 14th June 2025 in the Age of the Internet, a day I had set aside to tackle a ' *MALJohn Tributes* ' page, an email appeared in my inbox from a name I didn't immediately recognise! Jeremy Fackrell? **Who?** I read on, and light dawned!



' *Hello! Could I extend my thanks to Father John via the Newsletter for his leadership, encouragement, patience, and good humour during the training sessions leading to our confirmation? He has proved an inspiration to me personally in all things ecclesiastical and beyond. May he have a long and happy retirement! Regards, Jake (Fackrell)* '

(**Editor** ) Amen to that! Bravo, Jake, for being what I hope will be a trend-setter! That was exactly the kind of genuine, heartfelt expression of appreciation I was looking for. Here are some more – some from people who wished to be anonymous, others from people who were happy for their comments to be attributed:



Amanda Thomas (St Mary's) remembered: ' *He (Canon John) started at the same time as I did. He was very friendly and welcoming and made me feel at home.* '

June Haws (St Mary's) said: ' *He is very nice, very friendly, very understanding. I'm sorry to see him go.* '

Anon 1(!)(St Mary's) said: ' *Incredibly hard-worker. Exemplary in every way as a priest.* '

Rev'd Carol said: ' *Good-humoured, sensitive to the needs of the congregation. He is very perceptive, and readily understood when he was asked to provide a simple, private ceremony of celebration of love and companionship.* '

Dianna Pettet (St Mary's) responded: ' *He was very practical and supportive with appropriate advice when my internet account was scammed.* '

Nicholas Ashford (St Mary's) commented: *' A wonderful man! I'm devastated he's leaving! I'm happy for him that he's moving to be near his daughter, but, on a purely selfish level, I don't want him to go and I'll miss him greatly. Amongst his other qualities, I'll miss his practical abilities and sense of humour. '*

Anon 2 (St Mary's) remarked: *' I remember him when he first came – I vividly remember the meeting he called in the Church Hall. He was incredibly decisive! He asked for our thoughts and promised to listen to what we said. '*

Mary Hoskisson (St Mary's) offered: *' He was very welcoming to this new member of the congregation.'*

Jennifer Llewellyn (St Mary's Choir) said: *' Thank you for the music! He (John) helped with the pamphlets for our Golden Wedding celebration, and wrote a letter in support of my granddaughter's application for St Teilo's High School.'*

Gill Coles (from All Saints' Rhiwbina, who was baptised, confirmed, and married in St Mary's) said: *' I am incredibly grateful that Fr John gave up a Saturday morning to accommodate my family's wish to be there for the Interment of my husband Tony's ashes. Because Fr John sacrificed his Saturday morning, my son was able to travel from Yorkshire (where he has his own practice but finds it almost impossible to get time off) to be present. Thank you, Fr John, from me and all our family members.'*

Jill Evans (St Mary's) wanted to thank John *' for the Clergy Cabs! He has a large car, and always offers a lift to non-drivers, clergy and lay people alike, to important Diocesan or TWMA occasions '*. Jill adds, *' I'm also grateful for his DIY skills '*, and instances, somewhat cryptically, *' New bathroom lighting! '*

Leighton Mullins (All Saints' Llandaff North) commented: *' All credit to John for the huge effort he put in to transform the Whitchurch Benefice into the Taff Wenallt M.A. It took a lot of time and dedication.'*

Dave Gill (St Thomas's) agreed *' He effectively managed the transition from Benefice to Ministry Area to bring about a successful outcome.'*

Eddie Boyle, (also from St Thomas's) said: *' Throughout John's tenure he has acted pastorally to all the churches in the Benefice/ Ministry Area. He was very supportive indeed when our son Michael died.'*

Cath Barr [TWMA Safeguarding Officer] (St Thomas's) remarked: *' Seren mawr! We'll miss you! '*

June Gardner started attending St Thomas's after worshipping in the Cathedral for forty years. She said: *' I met John when he knocked on the door to visit my husband David who was gravely ill. He became the finest friend to both of us.'*

Pam Perry (St Thomas's) said: *' My first encounter with John was when we were doing a spring-clean in St Thomas's. He was dressed in shorts and T shirt, and started heaving chairs around. He was never afraid to pitch in and help.'*

Editor ✍️: I bumped into **Hazel Lewis** on the bridge across the stream in Rhiwbina when I was dog-walking today (23rd June). Mercilessly, with the dedication of a desperate newshound who had had no opportunity yet to interview *anyone* from All Saints' Rhiwbina, I completely ignored her paroxysm of coughing (*Summer cold*) and asked for **her** memories of MALJohn's time with us. Between bouts of coughing she told me:



Hazel Lewis (All Saints' Rhiwbina) *' During the early days of the Covid Lockdown, he set up a daily broadcast from the Rectory garden - weather permitting - for those who wanted a 'spiritual ten minutes' . Later on, he came to the Ladies' Circle meeting to talk to us about art. He told us that he regarded his own painting as an expression of his 'missionary' calling. That surprised us – it wasn't what we expected. I also remember that he attended some monthly Bingo sessions in St Mary's and stood in as ' Caller ' when Geoff Foot couldn't be there. John grew up in St Paul's, Grangetown, and I think he learned his Bingo experience there. One of those Bingo meetings coincided with my birthday, I remember. There were special cakes, and even a bouquet of flowers for me. I certainly didn't expect anything like that – it was a delightful surprise. '*

Editor ✍️: Hazel was also kind enough to give me the contact details of some other Rhiwbina members whom I might like to 'interview' for the Newsletter. Here's what **they** had to say:



Kathleen Jones (All Saints' Rhiwbina): *' I'd like to thank John on behalf of Rhiwbina Ladies' Circle for his kind and considerate ministry to us all. We all have fond memories of the talk he gave us about what art meant to him – how his vocation to the ministry was informed by the spiritual insight and inspiration he gained from his painting. We wish him every possible blessing in his retirement. I hope he'll visit us in Taff Wenallt occasionally – he'll always find a warm welcome from the members of the Ladies' Circle. '*

Sally Davies (All Saints' Rhiwbina) founder and leader of City Ringers handchime group: *' Without Fr John, the handchime group would never have got off the ground! A secondhand set of chimes was on sale for £500. I had no idea how to raise the funds to buy them! Fr John is a man with contacts! - one of his acquaintances had a bouncy castle, and John arranged for us to borrow it and inflate it outside All Saints' Rhiwbina. We organised a sponsored bounce! Passers-by were allowed to participate, but they had to pay. We raised £400, and then Justin Morgans from St Mary's, who was a Bank Manager before he retired, organised match-funding for us – which meant another £400 in the coffers! So we could afford to buy the chimes, and still had £300 over to purchase music stands and sheet music. We started rehearsing in 2019. Initially we used to perform items in community events – like our Ladies' Circle Charity Coffee Mornings, and the Rhiwbina Christmas Festival. When Covid struck in 2020 and 2021 it brought our activities to an end. City Ringers might have folded then, but once the Lockdowns were over, the ringers' enthusiasm and commitment not only kept it going but kept it growing. Our primary focus now is on ringing in residential care homes and performing for Senior Citizens' groups and Dementia Support groups. We now number sixteen ringers. Taster recruitment sessions are planned for September to prepare for our Christmas visits. Throughout our existence, our efforts have been unfailingly supported by Rev'd Peter and Fr John, and John has generously chosen the City Ringers as the charity to which his retirement collection on 20th July will be donated. '*

Deanna Morgan (All Saints' Rhiwbina): *' John always has time for people. Nothing was too much trouble. He has been tremendous, an amazing support to Annette [Jones] and me. He will be sorely missed. '*

Annette Jones (All Saints' Rhiwbina): *' I wouldn't be where I am today without John's support and guidance. I'm deeply grateful for his belief in me. '*

Marilyn Husband (All Saints' Rhiwbina): *' John 'phoned me the morning my husband died. He invited me to call in at the Rectory any time I needed to talk. ' The kettle's always on,' he said. '*

Jill Hopkins (All Saints' Rhiwbina): *' He 'phoned me, too, the morning my sister, Elisabeth Pexton, died. Rev'd Peter [Mortimer] was abroad on annual leave at the time, but he had very kindly warned John before he went that Lis was desperately ill. She died at 3.00am, and John phoned at 10.00am to ask whether there was anything he could do to help. He is very welcoming and supportive. When I told him I was just getting to know people in the MA, he replied ' You're part of it **already!** ' I can feel the warmth the minute I step into the MA churches. We're very lucky in our clergy. I've only known John for the eight months or so since I joined the TWMA . . . and now he's retiring! I shall miss him. '*

Dr Robert Lewis is on duty in St German's on Sundays. He writes: *' Since I've retired, the weekday Eucharists in All Saints' Llandaff North and St Mary's have been my spiritual mainstay during the week. I'm always impressed how these services are conducted in such a spiritual, prayerful, ordered, caring, welcoming, approachable and effective manner – words that could equally be used to describe Fr John's ministry here in the Ministry Area. Thank you, Fr John – you will be greatly missed. Best wishes for your retirement. '*

Editor ✍️: In the St Mary's Coffee Morning today (26th June) I cornered **John Hall**, (TWMA Treasurer, a gentle soul who worships in St Mary's with his wife **Morna** (TWMA Gift-Aid Secretary). They're just back from holiday in France – which is why I hadn't been able to pester them previously for their quotable quote about MALJohn. Brushing aside his plea: *' I need time to think! '*, I responded brutally: *' Tough! I've got a deadline to meet! '* Here's what he said:

John Hall: *' What I shall miss most about John are his sermons. They make me think. They come straight from the heart. I find them really helpful. '*

Editor ✍️: **Many tributes gathered from random meetings, but all agree that MALJohn possesses qualities that make him irreplaceable, an impossible act to follow.**

Edmond Haraucourt, le Rondel de l'adieu.

*To leave is to die a little,
It is to die to what we love:
We leave a little of ourselves
At all times and in all places.*



Source :
<https://www.mon-poeme.fr/poeme-partir-cest-mourir-un-peu/>

Editor : *From Our Own Correspondent!:*

It was inevitable – writing is what I do! – that my own tribute to John would be much longer – after all, for six months now, I've been wondering what I could say about John's legacy, how I could attempt to summarise the countless ways in which the spiritual and communal life of our four churches has been immeasurably enriched by his ministry.

When John was appointed Rector, our Benefice had only recently been enlarged – 'One Benefice, three churches' – to include All Saints' Llandaff North. I, an internet novice, laughably and wholly inaccurately called 'Webmaster', amended the strapline on the website Home Page to read: 'Four churches, one Benefice' in recognition of the unity we hoped to achieve between the four churches in the Rectorial Benefice of Whitchurch. It has been one of John's outstanding achievements, and one of which he is justifiably proud, that he has dragged us all, sometimes kicking and screaming as we tried to cling on to our separate parochial identities, into that corporate entity which is now the friendly, thriving Taff Wenallt Ministry Area.

Before John's arrival, online communication in the Benefice was somewhat random! There was an **official** webpage; there were also at least two others which were inoperable because their original passwords had been forgotten – and, in those early days, this meant that those accounts were irretrievable. The Facebook pages of two of our churches had suffered a similar fate. One Facebook page alone was up and running and was regularly updated.

Into this communications chaos came John, admirably equipped by his initial degree in Mathematics and Computing to bring order into chaos! With ruthless efficiency he took charge of the four Facebook pages and the Benefice website. I, as a Guardian reader, am programmed to regard any takeover of the Press as a signifier of impending dictatorship . . . but even I had to admit that communication across the Benefice was much improved!

And John **was**/is incredibly efficient in all sorts of ways. Shortly after his arrival – (*I believe he was already embarked on his mission to tackle the wilderness of brambles in St Mary's Churchyard*) – I mentioned to him casually in passing that a shrub overhanging the wall in the south west corner of the churchyard needed pruning, because passers-by had either to duck or step into the road to avoid it. (*I used to **walk** to church in those days!*) A week later the shrub had vanished, root, branch, and all! New brooms! Readers, be careful what you wish for when John is around!

More than one contributor commented that John is a **practical** man. One of my fondest memories of his determination and competence to get things done involves the drains and sewers sited underneath the northeast section of St Mary's Churchyard which extend under Penlline Road. On one occasion a few years ago they were spectacularly blocked! Pay the relevant local authorities to solve the problem? Not John! He had a pressure washer – nothing particularly unusual about that, perhaps – but he also possessed a set of rods and brushes acquired during a previous incumbancy to sweep years of soot from ecclesiastical chimneys. Clerical garb discarded in favour of an old Tshirt and shorts, sweating profusely, but undaunted and good-humoured as always, John set to work.

When an immovable blockage meets an unstoppable force . . . St Mary's drains have flowed fast and free ever since!

John is a **community** man/priest. He had a vision of St Mary's, not only as a place of Christian worship at the centre of Whitchurch village, but also as an open space at the village heart to be enjoyed by the entire community. 'Tower Tours' was one of his initiatives, as was also the placing of park benches in the churchyard. His realism and experience of human nature ensured that the benches are immovable, embedded in concrete! The fact that they have remained graffiti-free is perhaps an unspoken acknowledgement of the respect with which the local community regards him.

The Christmas Saturday morning shoppers of Whitchurch certainly enjoyed John's relatively recent institution of Carols (with mince pies) at the Lychgate in Advent; and local people responded appreciatively to his *Journey to Remembrance* in November – perhaps particularly as his bramble-tackling mission (*see previous page*) had revealed neglected War graves thought to have been lost or forgotten - before John embarked on his slash-and-burn initiative!

in 2024, as a response to the *Open Churchyards Movement*, John decided to direct his attention to All Saints' Llandaff North. A fund-raising concert by a local musician had been arranged in the church **itself** – photographs exist of dancing in the aisles! – but by far the most popular church**yard** attraction, particularly amongst the children, was 'Soak the Vicar!' Abandoning clerical garb once more, John, together with Jayne, his Ministry Area Lay Chair, stood stoically in full public view in front of the church to be enthusiastically pelted with car-wash sponges regularly topped up in a bath tub of water. I cannot remember the exact month in which the event took place, but I **do** remember that the weather was far from balmy!

Our fund-raising Summer Fair last year revealed John in a new light - as a born market trader, if ever there was one! A number of tables had been set out in the church hall, but one of our helpers was ill. Predictably it was Ministry Area Leader John who stepped into the breach and, clearly and noisily enjoying himself, did a roaring trade on the White Elephant stall.

In 2020 it was John, the ever-resourceful, a problem-solver *par excellence*, who was determined that the Covid pandemic would not defeat Christian worship in the Benefice of Whitchurch. His technological skills came into play again to provide those of us who had internet access with weekly online 10.00am Sunday Morning Worship and 6.00pm Evening Prayers. Lockdown AGMs were delivered via Zoom. As soon as churches were permitted to open again, John endlessly perused and issued the often contradictory and constantly-changing Government regulations and Church in Wales edicts to discover what we **were** – and weren't! – allowed to do. Attendance in those days was limited to twenty worshippers per service. Many of you will remember the Book-Your-Seat Rule. One-Way traffic arrows; and the No Entry signs appeared on TWMA church floors. It was John the indefatigable who had produced those.

It was after one Zoomed Morning Worship when churches were beginning to open up again that John asked for volunteers to capture church services 'on camera' to enable wider congregational participation in online services. *'It's quite simple'*, he said: *'All you have to do is point the camera and click!'* (This statement, I discovered, was profoundly misleading!) I emailed him some hours later to offer my services, never imagining for one minute that I would be the only congregation member (= *'mug'*) to volunteer. John rigged up a tripod, assembled from disparate parts bought on eBay, found one of his discarded mobile phones, installed the requisite software, and we were in business – masked, keeping Two Metres' Distance, of course, in St Mary's Chancel, dodging Henry [*then on a 'taster' placement in St Mary's, testing his vocation to the priesthood*] – capturing the Thursday Morning Eucharists on camera for broadcast on YouTube. (*Some years later, when I bumped into Henry after his ordination as Deacon, he said: 'So **that's** what your face looks like!' – to which I replied: 'Yes, it's much better masked!' It was the first time we had actually seen each other without masks!*)


Readers will have gathered by now that I, like many other people, have a **huge** respect for John. Inevitably, over the years, there have been occasional clashes of temperament because, as I tell him, we are both control freaks! He does admit there's a streak of obstinacy in his nature! He has been known to criticise my style of writing, in particular my use of bold and italic fonts, while good-naturedly accepting my obsession about apostrophes! We are poles apart in our churchmanship – in the Low-Anglican south-east of England where I come from we, like Jane Austen, called clegymen 'Mr'! On my very first meeting with John, I quoted St Matthew 23, v.9, saying: 'I don't **do** Father!' John, for his part, loathes the title 'Rev'd'! We compromised on 'Rector' until the abolition of the Rectorial Benefice of Whitchurch made that title redundant . . . hence 'MALJohn'. The ecclesiastical authorities have finally resolved my dilemma by installing John as a Canon of Llandaff Cathedral, in public recognition and celebration of his outstanding life-time of service. Readers who know John, browsing through the tributes printed here, will readily acknowledge that the accolade is no more than he deserves

Just before Christmas 2024 we in All Saints' in Llandaff North had our own private miracle. For some time the piano in the church hall had been leaning slightly, propped up against the wall to compensate for a damaged wheel. One Sunday, at the end of a smAll Saints' session, one of our members, a delightful, impulsive, keyboard-obsessed boy, wanted to demonstrate his growing pianistic skills. Before we realised what he was doing, he had raced to the piano and pulled it away from the wall. The crash shook the foundations of the hall and was heard over in the church itself. How our smAll Saint wasn't badly injured, even killed, can in all seriousness be attributed only to a miracle, a direct intervention by God Himself, and we have given constant thanks for it ever since.

Amazingly the piano, like the smAll Saint, appeared to be unharmed. **Our** nerves have taken much longer to recover! A new set of sturdy wheels was ordered and John – of course! – fixed them to the recumbent piano. Those of you who attended this year's Candlemas service in Llandaff North may remember that it took four or five stalwarts to heave the piano up onto its new feet. I watched from the far end of the hall, keeping a firm grip on the wriggling smAll Saint. He wanted to help, of course!

Perhaps this is the place to record my **huge** gratitude to John for the encouragement, indulgence and appreciation he demonstrates for our smAll Saints. His patience is remarkable – perhaps unusual in such an Action Man — and I am reminded that he was himself a talented and valued Primary School teacher before he entered the priesthood. Four smAll Saints who are old enough have made successful applications for places in the Bishop of Llandaff School in September. Some of their parents have relied on John’s help in completing the daunting application forms. I deeply appreciate his willingness to give our smAll Saints a public platform in Combined TWMA Services. smAll in name and number they **may** be, but they are **giants** in their energy, enthusiasm, and **amazing** potential, and our communal worship in Llandaff North benefits from their eagerness to share their talents with us.

I recognise, admire, and value John’s kindness, reliability, resourcefulness, determination, imperturbability, practicality, problem-solving abilities, seemingly limitless capacity for hard work, total devotion to his calling, and incredible good humour! Dianna Pettet (*a few pages back*) mentioned how reassuring John’s technological know-how had been when her computer was hacked. I, too, benefitted from his expertise in May when Microsoft decided to implement a major software update. My computer guru was away on a fortnight’s holiday. My whole network wanted a holiday, too, and went on strike! The laptop refused to talk to its printer. The on-screen image glared back at me and would not budge. I was frantic! They obviously didn’t realise just how desperate the situation was – **there was a Newsletter to publish!** After struggling on my own for hours with very little idea of what I was doing, I finally swallowed my pride and accepted the fact that I must call for expert help. John readily offered his assistance. I had no choice, though knew it would take me **hours** to clear a track from my front door through the chaos which is my house to enable him to reach the equipment! (*It took about six hours!*) John arrived – punctually, as is his habit – raised not an eyebrow at the remaining chaos, and set to work. He worked for two and a half hours non-stop – but that Newsletter was finished on time!

Thank you for **everything**, John. With love from the **Editor** :

Dates for your Diaries:

Date:	Time:	Venue:	Event:
Saturday 28.6.25	11.00 am	Llandaff Cathedral	Rev’d Henry - ordained Priest
Sunday 29.6.25	Second Sunday after Trinity – St Peter & St Paul		
Monday 30.6.25	2.00 pm	St Mary’s	MU Service Cancelled
Monday 30.6.25	3.15 pm	St Mary’s Hall	Whitchurch Youth Club
Monday 30.6.25	7.00 pm	St Mary’s	Festival Week Concert
Monday 30.6.25	7.00 pm	Copleston Methodist	LN Messy Church Planning
Tuesday 1.7.25	6.00 pm	All Saints’ Rhiwbina	Rev’d Henry’s First Eucharist
Wednesday 2.7.25	10.00 am	All Saints’ LN	Eucharist
Wednesday 2.7.25	10.00 am	All Saints’ Rhiwbina	Eucharist & Coffee Morning
Wednesday 2.7.25	7.00 pm	St Thomas’s	Healing Service
Thursday 3.7.25	10.00 am	St Mary’s	Eucharist & Coffee Morning
Thursday 3.7.25	6.30 pm	St Mary’s Hall	TWMA Youth

Date:	Time:	Venue:	Event:
Friday 4.7.25	12 noon, 1.00 pm, 2.00 pm		St Mary's Tower Tours
Sunday 6.7.25	Third Sunday after Trinity		
Sunday 6.7.25	11.30 pm	All Saints' LN	Church Committee Meeting
Sunday 6.7.25	6.00 pm	St Mary's	MAC Meeting
Monday 7.7.25	3.15 pm	St Mary's Hall	Whitchurch Youth Club
Tuesday 8.7.25	2.00 pm	St Mary's Hall	Friends of St Mary's
Tuesday 8.7.25	7.00 pm	All Saints' Rhiwbina	Evening Eucharist
Wednesday 9.7.25	10.00 am	All Saints' LN	Eucharist
Wednesday 9.7.25	10.00 am	All Saints' Rhiwbina	Eucharist & Coffee Morning
Thursday 10.7.25	10.00 am	St Mary's	Eucharist & Coffee Morning
Thursday 10.7.25	6.30 pm	St Mary's Hall	TWMA Youth Group
Saturday 12.7.25	10.00 am	All Saints' Rhiwbina	Summer Fair
Sunday 13.7.25	Fourth Sunday after Trinity		
Sunday 13.7.25	12.30 pm	St Mary's	Baptism
Sunday 13.7.25	2.30 pm	All Saints' LN	Messy Barbecue
Monday 14.7.25	2.00 pm	Rectory	MU Garden Party
Monday 14.7.25	3.15 pm	St Mary's Hall	Whitchurch Youth Group
Wednesday 15.7.25	10.00 am	All Saints' LN	Eucharist
Wednesday 15.7.25	10.00 am	All Saints' Rhiwbina	Eucharist & Coffee Morning
Thursday 16.7.25	10.00 am	St Mary's	Eucharist & Coffee Morning
Thursday 16.7.25	2.00 pm	All Saints' Rhiwbina	Ladies' Circle
Thursday 16.7.25	6.30 pm	St Mary's Hall	TWMA Youth Group
Sunday 20.7.25	Fifth Sunday after Trinity – MAL Canon John's Farewell Services		
Sunday 20.7.25	10.00 am	All Saints' LN	TWMA Combined Eucharist
Sunday 20.7.25	4.00 pm	St Mary's	John's Final Service & Party

Advance Notices

Saturday 9.8.25	10.00 am	All Saints' Rhiwbina	Working party
Monday 11.8.25	2.00 pm?	St Mary's	MU Picnic (<i>Mary Sumner</i>)
Date:	Time:	Venue:	Event:
Tuesday 12.8.25	6.00 pm	All Saints' Rhiwbina	Evening Eucharist
Thursday 4.9.25	2.00 pm	All Saints' Rhiwbina	Ladies' Circle Eucharist
Thursday 4.9.25	6.00 pm	All Saints' Rhiwbina	Church Committee Meeting
Tuesday 16.9.25	2.00 pm	St Mary's Hall	Bingo resumes
Sunday 5.10.25	Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity		TWMA churches' Harvest
Sunday 5.10.25	Henry's Half Marathon for bigmoose – local Mental Health Charity Target £1,000 SPONSORS NEEDED! www.tinyurl.com/2pc49tze		
Saturday 11.10.25	7.00 pm	All Saints' Rhiwbina	Treorchy Male Choir Concert
	ticketsource.co.uk/taff-wenallt-ministry-area or ASR Committee		



Goodbye – God be with you!

This does feel a bit like writing my own obituary, but here goes!

How do I sum up seven years in the Whitchurch Benefice and Taff Wenallt Ministry Area? For that matter, how do I sum up 29 years in ordained ministry? I suppose the simple answer boils down to just one word – **joyful**. I love being a priest – I love being a Ministry Area Leader – and I loved being a vicar.

There were challenges, of course: global pandemic, lack of funds to pay the quota, a freezing cold Rectory in the winter, disgruntled parishioners, and the many times people leave messages that begin '*I know it's your day off, but....*'

Well, despite the challenges, despite the difficulties, despite all of the above, I love my job, and I've loved being in ordained ministry. It fits me like a glove.

I've often said you could cut my arm off, and written right through the middle of me, just like a stick of rock, would be the word 'Priest.' It's not what I do, it's who I am. That's the difference between a job and a vocation. I'm lucky enough to wake up every morning knowing I am where God wants me to be. And because I trust Him, I don't have to worry about the challenges. St Paul once wrote '*If God is for us, who can be against us?*' (Romans 8 verse 31) Paul's attitude pretty much sums up my ministry. I've always known that God is in charge, and knowing this gives me the confidence to serve Him joyfully, optimistically, and hopefully, despite all the challenges.

As I prepare to move to Hartlepool to begin retirement, I go with lots of memories of the special people God has blessed me with in my journey of faith. From 'Miss Fry' who first taught me the faith in Sunday School, to each and every one of you here in Taff Wenallt - you are all treasures of our church. You have enriched my life, my ministry and my faith, by journeying with me. Thank you!

Thank you for your prayers, your support, and your encouragement over the last seven years. It has been an honour to serve you. I will miss you all.

Finally, a huge 'THANK YOU' to Sallyann. Without her unwavering support my ministry would not have been possible. It's not easy being married to a vicar, and it's certainly not easy being married to me! I love her more than I can say, and of all the people God has blessed me with, she is the greatest. (She'll kill me for writing this!)

Goodbye simply means 'God Be With You' and I think it's the best word to end with. 'God Be With You' - as He is with me. May He give you courage as you face the future. May He give you joy as you seek to serve Him. May He give you hope, as you continue to trust Him - because He is in charge, and to God be the Glory!

Goodbye - God be with you.

With love and prayers,
Fr John.