

October 2011

# LINKS



**Newsletter and Magazine of the  
Abergavenny Group of Methodist Churches  
in the Hills and Vales Circuit**

## FORWARD NOTICE

# CHRISTMAS *encounter*

**FREE ADMISSION!**

**Abergavenny Borough Theatre**  
**Sunday Evening 11<sup>th</sup> December 2011 – *Ticket only***

**>>>>> TICKETS NOW AVAILABLE <<<<<**



**International Speaker Rev. Ian Coffey**

**[www.closeencountersabergavenny.org](http://www.closeencountersabergavenny.org)**

**INVITE A FRIEND**

**What we need to do!**

- Pray
- Give
- Invite

## ***From the Manse . . . . .***

### **Do I really like Flying!!!?**

I walked out of my house and the wind hit me. Not a nice gentle wind, this was a full sea coastal blast. It was a biting cold wind that penetrated like sharp knives straight through my coat and chilled me to the bone. I am not sure why I combed my hair before going out! I loaded my bags into the back of a Land Rover and we drove to Aberdeen.

As we took the coast road out of the darkness came the sea spray hitting the windscreen and every now and again causing the Land Rover to “move” in the wind. We arrived at Aberdeen to see our plane delayed (until daylight). We had a plane to catch in Paris though to Bulgaria. We would have twenty minutes between planes.

I got on the plane and things did not “feel good”! As we took off the plane shifted sideways and the stewardesses stayed firmly in their seats. The captain announced that due to bad weather there was no tea and coffee and we were to stay strapped in. Yeah, I realised as we were bouncing around that this might be a good idea.

We came into Charles De Gaulle airport sideways and bounced along the runway. I checked to see if I was still alive, checked my watch and realised that we had five minutes before the next plane set off. A mad dash and we missed it by at least fifteen minutes as Charles De Gaulle is designed to make you late for your plane!!

We then spent five hours being shouted at in French (it seems strange that if you first don't understand, people shout as they think that makes it more legible), waiting around and finally getting a plane to Italy (yes, Italy as we had to get another connecting flight). An exploding engine, lost luggage and strange yeast drinks later we got to Sofia some seventeen hours after setting off. We missed a plane and chaos happened and it affected things for days or even weeks.

We are in a year of worship, looking at worship, reflecting on different styles and ways and asking God to show us more about worship. To be more in love with HIM. If you miss what God is saying and showing us, you will miss out on what God has for you. The congregation will have moved on in worship and you will be left wondering how to get back on track. You may even feel that you don't recognise the church.

We cannot just opt out and think that will be fine. The Spirit of God is like a river or the wind, He moves us along and we grow and experience new aspects of worship.

Will you miss what God is doing?

*Andrew Williams*

# Wales World Trade Fair

## **This year sees the fifth annual Wales World Trade Fair in Brecon and Abergavenny.**

The events involve local communities with Fair trade traders and cultural activities from all over the world. It is the largest event of it's kind in Wales. In the past we have been supported by Roy Noble (BBC Wales), Jane Davidson (ex minister for the environment), Harriet Lamb (director of the Fairtrade Foundation), Linda Lewis (singer/songwriter) and Sarah Dickens (BBC Wales). The event continues to grow in popularity and this year will be even bigger than before. All proceeds from the event will go to Love Zimbabwe Charity.

[www.lovezimbabwe.co.uk](http://www.lovezimbabwe.co.uk) The charity undertakes community, educational and medical projects in Zimbabwe.

### **Saturday 1st October - The Guild Hall, Brecon. 10.15 - 17.00**

30 stalls selling Fair/ethical trade goods from all over the world. Charity stalls, Zimbabwean food, and a march from the Market Hall to the Guild Hall with local school children dressed as African warriors.

Supported by the Co-operative shop, Fairtrade Brecon and Wales and Oxfam Cymru.

To be opened by the Mayor of Brecon and Kirsty Williams AM.

### **Sunday 2nd. October - The Market Hall, Abergavenny. 10.00 - 16.00**

50 stalls selling Fair/ethical goods from around the world. Charity stalls, Zimbabwean food, live music, Fairtrade song competition, Fairtrade fashion show, children's zone.

Supported by Fairtrade Abergavenny and Wales, Abergavenny Council, and Oxfam Cymru.

Both events sponsored by - Fairtrade Wales, Vodaphone 'World of Difference', Awards for All, The Co-operative membership, and Oxfam Cymru.

Kind Regards,

*David Holman*

Love Zimbabwe

# Castle Street Friendship Club Report

I think this year has been the most disrupted year we have had because of snow and frost during the winter months so please can I remind members that we have agreed that if there is snow or ice on the ground we will cancel the meeting; we do not want any accidents.

In spite of the weather we have had another successful year, and we give very many thanks to Margaret Morgan for arranging such a varied programme for us.

This year our outing was to Bourton-on-the-Water. We could not have had a better day. The weather was fine and dry without being too hot. We did manage to see some bluebells in the Forest of Dean although most of them were over. We had the same driver as last year which made it even more of a family trip. I think everyone enjoyed the day, and we thank all those who helped arrange it.

I am sorry to report that two of our members have died this year. Mrs Eirwen Nicholas died after a long illness early in the year. Mrs Ethel Gething had not been able to attend meetings for some years now and passed away peacefully in April just short of her 98th birthday. We thank God that we had the privilege of knowing these ladies.

At the end of June Cliff Philips left us to move to live with his daughter and her family near Ilford in Surrey. Cliff was our eldest active member at 97 and will be sorely missed. We have heard from Cliff since his move and he is settling in very well and has been made very welcome in his new church.

Once again we would like to say thank you to all those who help us: to our minister Rev. Andrew Williams and the retired ministers and local preachers who take our devotional meetings, to Ken Gee for playing the piano and to Peter Millward for help with printing. Thank you all.

*Pat Millward*

# **Worship: Beat the Myths, Find the Glory**

Jarrood Cooper

I have discovered the greatest hindrance to a move of God can be quite simply right between my ears! My arrogant senses of right and wrong, godly and secular, acceptable and unthinkable. My religious education. My British culture. They can all hinder the divine, eternal culture of heaven from piercing through the dull temporal culture of church and ministry today.

In my own faltering worship journey, I have discovered fallacy after fallacy in my thinking, many of which I have had to reject in order to see God's power at work. Here is my own list of eight great myths of church worship that must be re-programmed in order to see the power of God at work in our meetings:

## **Myth No. 1 – God's Order is Like Our Order**

I have discovered that Church can either be a mortuary or a nursery. While a mortuary may be clean, disinfected, tidy and orderly, it is a place of death. But life is messy – you can't avoid that. A nursery is full of life: Noise, mess up the walls, brown stuff in corners, funny smells and big mistakes. But it is life; wonderful life! People learning, growing, feeding, sharing and laughing.

The Church should be a place of learning and growth, like a nursery. Some would say "God is not a God of disorder", but you must understand that God's order is not 'western' or subject to your culture. God's idea of order may be the day of Pentecost, with people looking drunk and babbling in tongues. His order may be like the temple, so filled with glory, that people are unable to do their work. You've only got to read a few pages of scripture to realise God overwhelms earthly situations with heavenly "order" at times. We must allow the mess of life and learning to exist in our churches if we desire his power.

## **Myth No. 2 – God is Polite and Politically Correct**

We are living in the era of the Politically Correct. The problem is that God is not always very P.C.! Offence is a part of his Gospel. Remove its offence and you remove something of its power. The early Church brought fear to cities, looked a little drunk at times, yet saw thousands saved! Just read Jesus' sermons and you discover his communication techniques included some extremely straight talking, dodgey mud packs and a fair amount of spitting! Jesus' language was pretty rich, his disciples pretty raw, and his Holy Spirit's outpouring pretty riotous!

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We must stop trying to impress the world with our songs and well ordered services. We must start to experience God's powerful presence among us. We must move in signs and wonders and see, as great revivalists like the Wesleys did, God move among us and shake the congregations and contents of our meetings. This will not be accomplished through polished music, polite messages and politically correct ministry.

### **Myth No. 3 – The Local Church should be Like a Conference**

One of the great, yet subtle pressures on church leaders today comes from our Church culture of camps and conferences. Once a year, many in our churches exodus to wonderful camps where thousands congregate. The greatest preachers preach and the worship (especially the music) is often outstanding.

While I love conferences, the subtle error that such conferences may teach us is that we need to re-create all aspects of the conference culture at home – with amazing music and concert style worship in our local church meetings. While that may be a great blueprint for one-off events, special celebrations and camps, it should not be the “bread and butter” design of week to week church life. It breeds weak, entertainment centred Christians, who are quite happy to sing their way to heaven, yet rarely engage themselves in corporate prayer, body ministry, deep intercessions and other such necessary local church activities.

### **Myth No. 4 – If in Doubt, do what you did Last Week!**

Many of us have a pattern of worship service. If God doesn't speak clearly to us, we normally slip straight back into that pattern. But I tend to think, if God doesn't tell me to do something, I can do whatever I want. I can use my imagination and make a meeting interesting and exciting. I don't have to fall back on what we already know. I can keep the congregation supple and expectant by being creative and interesting. God has made us in his image, and that means being imaginative and creative. We are alive, which means we should develop, change and grow. This should be expressed in our worship, as we use our entire God given faculties to lead the people of God to his throne.

### **Myth No. 5 – Better Music will mean Better Worship**

I am regularly asked to speak to worship groups. The request usually comes from a church leader who sincerely wants to see an improvement in the area of worship in their church. On meeting most worship groups I often reach the opinion that the issue of improving worship lies not with the music, but with the congregation

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In many cases our worship may not improve by getting better at music or by increasing the spirituality of our worship teams. Better music will give us a better looking meeting, but may not actually improve the worship or the manifestation of God's presence. We quickly reach a ceiling of what we can accomplish in church by becoming more musically skilful. There comes a point when we have to face the congregation and let them know they need to grow. That will only come by teaching, training and leading the congregation to a new place in God.

### **Myth No. 6 – Our Worship Culture is the Right One**

It is countries like the USA and Europe that spearhead the worlds most high profile trends in worship music today. It is these countries that have developed million pound businesses in worship music and have created pop-star worship leaders for us to admire. Though many of these ministries deserve our gratitude and time, their profile does not mean that everything these nations are propagating is God's perfect blueprint for corporate worship today.

In a visit to Kenya I ministered at a conference on worship where I taught many of the principles outlined in this article. As I taught, the congregation went bananas! Jumping up and down and shouting – “High Fives” and loud “Amens” were a-plenty!

After the conference I asked my host why this sort of message might be so important to Africans. I presumed that they would be far more into power, prayer and the more costly side of worship than my own country, and that my message might be less relevant.

The Kenyan minister told me that there was great pressure by worship ministries from America and England, to develop the “concert style” worship in their churches. I reassured them that although America and England had good musicians and a high profile, it was African nations, South America and parts of Asia that were experiencing revival, and they would be far better off using them as a model! The very nations that propagate the current western worship scene are the very nations that are not in revival. I pray that we would become more like our neighbours in revival, not they like us, with our skilful, yet presenceless programmes.

### **Myth No. 7 – We Have to Fill the Allotted Time**

One of the greatest hindrances to worship is that we feel we have to fill an allocated time slot. I don't know about you, but sometimes I feel that God has

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done all he wants to do in worship within fifteen minutes, but then we churn a further 45 minutes of song because “it’s the worship time”, and someone, somewhere has said it needs to last at least 50 minutes! The problem with long, dutiful worship times, when God is obviously not present in a manifest way, is that many in the congregation become bored. This leads to a lack of expectancy and excitement, which in turn leads to worsening worship times as the weeks go on.

### **Myth No. 8 – Imitation is as Good as Revelation**

Imitation floods the ranks of the Church. Sadly, there are very few originals. There are very few who will seek God and find his blueprint for a life, church, meeting or ministry time. We kick into “auto pilot” week after week, churning out what we’ve seen in other churches, camps and conferences. We must learn that the most powerful place to be in God is an original. Yet ministries imitate styles, even down to dress sense, running orders and album covers. While imitation is flattering to the imitated, it can also show a remarkable lack of authenticity, a value close to God’s heart. He demands that we worship in truth, meaning “reality” or “authenticity” (John 4:23). You don’t impress God or woo him to your temple by saying “This is what we saw so-and-so do and you turned up”! No, he wants to give you **his** blueprint, for **your** temple! A one-off, intimate expression, written in God’s handwriting on your heart.

### **Let’s pray together:**

Lord take a hold of my mind and shake the religious, small mindedness from my thinking. Show me the eternal culture of heaven and allow me to host your divine presence on earth. I’m tired of meetings and singing songs – I want a divine encounter with the You and with Your people. Take me, shake me, mould me, until I have built a temple for your presence!

*Amen.*



### **Biblical Songs ??**

Noah: "Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head"  
Adam and Eve: "Strangers in Paradise"  
Lazarus: "The Second Time Around"  
Esther: "I Feel Pretty"  
Daniel : "The Lion Sleeps Tonight"  
Moses: "The Wanderer"  
Jezebel: "The Lady is a Tramp"  
Samson: "Hair"  
Salome: "I Could Have Danced All Night"

## ***Snippets***

### **Charity dropped for praying for clients**

A Christian organisation has been ejected from an advice agencies group because it offers to pray for people in debt. Christians Against Poverty (CAP) has been ditched by AdviceUK, the largest network of independent advice agencies in the country, due to its view that prayer is ‘incompatible’ with the umbrella group’s conditions of membership. AdviceUK chief executive Steve Johnson said: ‘Advisers must not offer or impose their values.’ Andrea Williams of the Christian Legal Centre said the decision gives the false impression ‘that there is something wrong, something sinister, about being motivated by faith’. CAP says it is ‘committed to providing impartial help and advice to all members of society’ and has never made prayer a condition of its free service.

Source: *Daily Mail* (3/9)

### **Survey shows schools don’t have a prayer**

A ComRes study has found that most state schools are flouting the law on daily Christian assemblies. The research, on behalf of BBC local radio, found that 64 per cent of parents believe their child is not attending worship every day. In addition, 60 per cent of the 1,743 adults questioned said that collective worship should not be compulsory. Some schools teach pupils about community life and values rather than provide worship. A Church of England spokesman said that ‘collective worship ... should not be confused with corporate worship when everyone is of the same belief’, while the Bishop of Oxford added that Christian assemblies are an ‘important statement’ about ‘what we believe as a country’. The National Secular Society condemned group worship as ‘an abuse of children’s human rights’.

Sources: *The Telegraph* (6/9)

### **Evangelicals contribute more to society**

A survey of 1,151 evangelical Christians has confirmed that they are more active citizens than the average Brit. The online poll showed concrete support for the basic doctrines of Christianity, but also revealed the respondents’ dedication to good causes. The Evangelical Alliance/Christian

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Research survey found that a quarter of evangelicals are trustees of a registered charity – way more than the 2.2 per cent national average. Four in 100 have joined a political party, compared to 1.3 per cent of the population, and nine per cent are school governors – almost 13 times more than the norm. More evangelicals also serve as councillors and magistrates, and 90 per cent took part in the Alternative Vote referendum – more than double the national turnout of only 42 per cent.

Sources: *Christian Today*

## **British materialism destroying family life, says UNICEF**

UK parents are giving children all the latest toys, gadgets and designer fashions instead of spending quality time with them, reports UNICEF. The UN children's agency called for a ban on advertising to children under 12 as one way of attempting to break a cycle of 'compulsive consumerism' undermining family life. Parents' long working hours mean they are 'too tired' at the end of the day to play with their children, so TVs, computers and games consoles are used as 'babysitters'. Children are left to their own devices and so parents lose control. UNICEF linked this materialist upbringing to the recent riots, where teenagers looted designer clothes and electrical goods. The report's author, Dr Agnes Nairn, said: 'Children would prefer time with their parents to heaps of consumer goods.'

Source: *Church Times* (16/9)

## **Consumerism theme for ad selling Christmas**

A church-advertising charity's latest Christmas campaign updates the nativity for today's fashion-obsessed, shopaholic society. Church-Ads.net's Christmas 2011 poster shows a nativity scene, but instead of shepherds and wise men from the East there is a cycle courier, a plasterer and three sharp-suited entrepreneurs, besides Mary and Joseph. All are presented as 'trendy twenty-somethings' and instead of gold, frankincense and myrrh, the gifts are a Swarovski crystal perfume bottle, a Fabergé egg and a replica Damien Hirst skull. The slogan runs: 'However you dress it up ... Christmas begins with Christ'. Mike Elms of ChurchAds.net said the illustration shows 'the meeting of Christianity and high street consumerism' but Jesus is still 'its clear focus'. This year, adverts will appear in regional and national newspapers as well as outside churches.

Source: *Christian Today* (12/9)



## SHOE BOX APPEAL



The summer holidays are hardly over and the shops are beginning to display Christmas cards. Very soon, we will see Christmas merchandise on sale & people will be starting their Christmas shopping. It is also the time of the year when we begin to think about our annual shoe box appeal, which will require some early Christmas shopping for small gifts to fill a box with love for a needy child or young person



This year all gift shoe boxes collected in our area will be going to children in Belarus. We have been asked this year to please remember teenagers as well as the younger children as there is often a shortage of gifts for this group. It has also been suggested that, with the London 2012 Olympics just around the corner, we might like to get into the spirit of things with sports-themed shoe boxes! Not only will this give us the chance to do something a bit different but will also give the opportunity to send sporty items to these underprivileged children.

Our “Shoe Box” service at Castle Street this year will be on **Sunday 6th November** when we will be thinking about the children who will receive these boxes, for whom Christmas will not be a time of fun and celebration. **We hope that as many of you as possible will again participate in this appeal.**

The children to whom these shoe box gifts will go are those who will not otherwise receive any presents at Christmas because of their poor circumstances. The joy and love they feel when they open their boxes lets them know that someone loves and cares about them. They will be told the message of Christmas and why gifts are given at this time. We hope you will help to bring a little happiness to these unfortunate children by sending your love packed in a box.

*Nigel*

Another month gone already!!

Well, the Urban Hymns I mentioned last month went very well again. Dai Hankey was very inspirational and was very well received.

During the month the young people who filmed our production of a Midsummer Night's Dream, with the help of Valley and Vale Community Arts, have been working on editing the film which has involved them in some very intense concentration. The editing was almost complete when, very unfortunately, the laptop on which it was all stored decided to crash with dire consequences!! Fortunately most of the film was backed up and the laptop is being worked on to recover as much as possible. All being well, despite this set-back the film will be ready imminently for its first screening to the assembled crowd of all those involved in the play.

It is not too late to order a copy of the DVD if anyone is interested and hasn't yet done so. They are available at the bargain price of £5 and can be ordered from us here at 7Corners.

In between working on the DVD time was found for a visit to the 'Christian Corner' at the Notting Hill Carnival. What an experience!! Apart from visiting the 'Christian Corner' the spectacle of the Carnival was also taken in. A bit of a change from the quiet streets of Abergavenny, even on Friday and Saturday nights. It goes without saying that it made quite an impression on our young people and the adults accompanying them!!

Bye for now.

See you next month

*Judith E.*

## **Extracts from the General Secretary's Report to Conference – specifically pages 39-41 with editing.**

### **God's properties and our stewardship: resources of discipleship and mission**

46. One has to be careful how it is said, but many of us think and state that we still have too many church buildings. I agree, and because of the understandable sensitivities of the subject, some further comments are necessary.

47. Although possibly as many as a thousand of our buildings have fulfilled their gospel purpose and been sold off in various ways over the last decade or so, we still have well in excess of 5200 church properties. This, for a denomination with an overall 'roll' of c582000 people, c8500 local preachers (active and 'sat down'), c1750 active presbyters, c125 active deacons and several hundred lay employees is a huge number. Nor, in the light of what I stated above, is the single remedy or response to appoint a local pastor to each and leave everything else as it is! A several pronged engagement is required of us.

48. Given this broad context it is hardly surprising that when travelling extensively around the Connexion as I do, one is led inevitably to the conclusion that we spend too great a proportion of our finite resources of people, time and money on maintaining our many buildings. The loyalty of Methodist people is incredible and our faithfulness astonishing, but we do have an understandable tendency to too readily associate the sustaining of the life of our chapels with the work of God's kingdom, which while not antithetical are not actually synonymous.

*(Section about how our church buildings are a treasure removed so the quote is not too long).*

51. Consequently a better assertion is that we almost unquestionably have too many church buildings, meaning too many in the wrong places, too many unfitted to sustain our life as a discipleship movement shaped for mission today. Our buildings are assets – both capital and liquid – for God's kingdom, our communities and our congregations. We are at our best when we regard our 'plant' as resources for God's mission rather than an inheritance to be preserved at all costs like the family silver. A more

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sacrificial, strategic approach is needed. What kind of spaces do we need to be the discipleship, missional movement God wants us to be in the twenty first century? Do we need to *own* all? Will we readily enter an ever-wider range of partnerships if we discern that the mission of God is thereby enhanced?

Can we encourage each other to release God's resources for the calling of discipleship and mission today with glad and thankful hearts? How do we enable each other to not regard each closed church building as a failure, rather than the Christian cycle of death and resurrection?

**Are we able to put a 'mission accomplished' sign on our closing premises and allow ourselves to hear the whisper of the Spirit, 'well done, thou good and faithful servants'?**

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## A REVIEW

*All stewards, treasurers, property and pastoral secretary's from Castle Street, Tredegar, Llanelly Hill, Glasbury and Cyldach.*

Many years ago in Tredegar there were several Methodist chapels (at least seven) now there is only going to be one. Harcourt and Vale through a year of tears, prayer, many discussions and selflessness came to a decision to merge. I was very moved with the bravery, courage and sensitivity of every person involved. We trust now with the appointment of the Lay Pastor that we will see growth in the next few years and what has been dramatic decline in the last 50 years will be reversed.

However, every church in my section now needs to look at the future and see what God is saying. Maintenance and the minister being a chaplain/caretaker is not an option. Methodism is the ministry of the whole people of God. Maintenance simply brings spiritual death. Prayer, Every member ministry and evangelism are essential for growth.

On the 20 October we will be having a sectional review meeting. We will look at the following questions for each church:-

1. Where will you be in 2015?
2. What are your plans for growth? How will these be achieved and how will you implement these changes.
3. Do you need to merge with another church or declare Mission Accomplished?

**We will meet at Llanelly Hill at 7:30 p.m. Thursday 20 October.**

## **Possible visit to Maua, Kenya in 2012**

The Leadership Team at Castle Street agreed recently that we should look into the possibility of taking a team to Maua in the autumn of 2012.

Subsequently, when we told Stanley Gitari at the Methodist hospital that we were sending out a donation in response to their emergency food appeal his response included the following:

*'We look forward to future Mission partnership with you and the congregation! I have been wondering!! Are you likely to come to Maua any time soon? Please if you do you are more than welcome to come and visit some of our ministry work here in the hospital'*

We shall be in touch with him to ask whether there is a project that we could help with either in the hospital or in the church. If there is, this will become the focus of our fund-raising effort in the next 12 months, and we will publicise the nature of the project.

We are encouraged to take a team instead of simply sending money because of Stanley's invitation and because of the response of the Kenyans when the team went out with Habitat for Humanity in 2007. In answer to a direct question they said that they appreciated people coming in person because it made it clear that this was a personal commitment and not just a conscience-salving exercise.

**If anyone wants to express an interest at this stage, please let  
Peter Millward have your details .....**

**(Tel: 852509; Email: [peter.millward@homecall.co.uk](mailto:peter.millward@homecall.co.uk)).**

# Tredegar Methodist Church

## A warm welcome in the valleys:

My family and I are pleased to say that the renowned warm welcome of the Welsh valleys is still alive and well in Tredegar. We are thrilled with the love and support the people of the town and especially the members of the new Tredegar Methodist Church have shown to us.

The people of Tredegar Methodist have warm, honest hearts and a sense of fun! We already feel part of the family here. I would like to take this opportunity to say a heartfelt thank you from myself, Faith and the children to all who have welcomed us into their hearts and town.

It was such a privilege to take my first services on the 11<sup>th</sup> September in the morning and evening. Despite the sadness at the closure of Harcourt and Vale, there is a growing sense of expectation and excitement at what God has planned for the new Tredegar Methodist Church.

As we move forward with open ears and attentive hearts ready to follow God wherever he leads, we all take comfort from the fact that our 'home' is in God's presence (Psalm 84). Please join us in praying that through the ministry of this new church, many people in Tredegar will come to salvation and discover their true home.

*Keefe Owen* (Lay Pastor- Tredegar Methodist Church)

God Said:

“For I am the Lord your God, who takes hold of your right hand and says to you; Do not fear, I will help you”.

Isaiah 41:13 NIV

# The Ten Lamest Criticisms in Church Life

Posted on August 25, 2011 by Jarrod Cooper

For some fun, thought I'd write about the most ridiculous criticisms I have heard (or made!) in my journey of Christian life and leadership. In at number ten... a common one these days:

**TEN: "Do we really need all these lights and tricks to worship?!"** When confronted with a culture beyond our own, we tend to criticise as a defence mechanism. Things like lighting rigs, certain styles of music, dress, visual effects (whether a stained glass window or lasers), are all just a reflection of culture. We don't need any of it, just like we don't need seats, carpets, a roof, or even clothes, to worship. But I would rather you dressed in public & gathered out of the rain. And I think God expects us to use every bit of cultural development available to express worship. Let's let the lighting engineers "Praise him on the lighting desk", without being miserable about it.

**NINE: "It's not as good as it was"** Ah! The power of nostalgia. The reality is, "it wasn't as good as it was", either! The human mind is designed to fade away painful or boring periods of life, and gold emboss positive experiences. The result is we always give the distant past an unrepeatable perfection in our minds, as history concertinas into the good memories. It actually **wasn't** as good as you remember. In God, who leads from glory to glory, your best days are always ahead of you. As they say, even nostalgia is not what it was!

**EIGHT: "We miss being together"** Usually aimed at leaders who have taken people into multiple services or venues due to growth. The reality is you were never ALL together before, as 100% of church membership is very rarely in the building at the same time, even when you run only one service! If souls are God's no.1 concern, then large amounts of people being discipled is important, and multiple venues and services are a must for the way forward. We must put the Great Commission above cosiness.

**SEVEN: "Youngsters weren't like that in my day"** Said by aging believers who may have past their best & perhaps are genuinely disappointed in young people. The truth is "It isn't YOUR day (of being youthful) anymore"; it is 2011. The pressures really are quite different, and perhaps sometimes we forget what it was like to work through peer pressures and youthful pride. The last verses of the Old Testament show that "The hearts of the fathers must turn to the children", not vice versa.

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It is for the older generation to turn and embrace the young, then they will accept the counsel of the former. Let's do our best to understand the young, then generation will tell of His works to generation.

**SIX: "It's all flesh!"** said by quieter Christians of happy clappy believers gatherings. Well, the snoozy, arms folded, seated worshipper is ALL FLESH too! And I'd prefer my flesh "happy and clappy", as scientists have proven it's better for your health! I'd also say of worship, if it's in the book of Psalms, let's do it. God put it there for a reason. Clap, shout, dance, cry out, bang loud cymbals. "Make His praise glorious"!

**FIVE: "He's not my style"** Often said of preachers who shout, pace, or tell too many stories. Unfortunately, God does love to face us with problematic style issues. He did in the form of Elijah, John the Baptist and even Jesus. If we met them today, in ministry mode, we would really struggle with the very "un-PC" shouting, fire falling, camels hair clothes, locust meals, repeated messages (John: "Repent!"), table turning and the declaration of "eat my flesh". As Wimber used to say "God offends the mind, to reveal the heart". Besides, who made you the plumb line of divine "style"?! There is actually a divine reason why God allows style to offend us: It is humbling.

**FOUR: "They might have large numbers, but where's the depth?"** Said of churches with a big fringe. But wasn't this the atmosphere of Jesus revolutionary campaigns in the dusty hills of Israel? It is true that the fringe grows bigger as a church grows, but having people along who are still only "thinking about" following Jesus, is where we are supposed to be. Gays, drug addicts, people who are too busy for God, should be allowed to buzz around the edges of our churches, which gives a very different feel to the "small, committed, closeted" church.

**THREE: "It's alright for them!"** Aimed at leaders of larger churches, often in relation to what resources are available to them as compared to smaller churches. This conveniently forgets the fact that churches with more people, also have more problems, bigger problems, and problems that cost more. Usually the challenges are multiplied exponentially. And for the leader, the bigger the church, the greater the stresses. We probably would not enjoy being Brian Houston, even though it looks fun from a distance!

**TWO: "We don't have the money or staff to do the excellence thing"**  
Excellence is not just about presentation of venue or programmes.

*Continued >>*

In fact, the very highest and most impactful forms of excellence are completely free of charge. A smile. Warmth. Friendliness. Care. Thoughtfulness. There are many places that are excellent at presentation, but poor at warmth. Genuine joy and care for people will win out every time in the pursuit of souls for Christ. True excellence can be achieved for free!

### **And in at number 1....**

**ONE: “It’s not about numbers”** Usually said by people with low numbers. They seem to miss the fact that God wrote a book called .... “Numbers”, which was full of numbered lists. Because of God’s love of numbers we know Jesus had 12, 72, 120 disciples, he fed 5000 & 3000 were saved on the day of Pentecost. Each Number represents a precious person, full of hopes, dreams, fears, purpose. Thankfully for you, He even NUMBERS the hairs on your head. God is into LARGE numbers (currently about 7 billion). To miss that, is to miss His heart. Any church leader who is not into numbers will never have a large, growing, healthy church. Let’s be honest, only insecure people say “God isn’t into numbers”.

As one preacher put it, “If you count the offering, but not the people, it shows what you value most”.

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## **Count on God**

Count your blessings instead of your crosses;

Count your gains instead of your losses.

Count your joys instead of your woes;

Count your friends instead of your foes.

Count your smiles instead of your tears;

Count your courage instead of your fears.

Count your full years instead of your lean;

Count your kind deeds instead of your mean.

Count your health instead of your wealth;

Count on God instead of yourself.

*Anon.*

# **Iran: Christians arrested, 6,500 Bibles seized**

Christians in Iran are facing increasing hostility from authorities in the officially Islamic country.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) has received reports that a pastor has been arrested for a second time on August 17.

Abdolreza 'Matthias' Haghnejad, a pastor in the evangelical Church of Iran denomination, was reportedly re-arrested by Iranian authorities in Rasht whilst making a pastoral visit.

His family are in the dark about why he has been arrested and his whereabouts. There are also concerns that he does not have access to an attorney.

Pastor Haghnejad was arrested previously in 2006. Earlier this year, he was charged with activities against the order and rounded up by authorities along with 10 other members of his denomination. He was released when the authorities dropped the charges.

Last month, a Christian man and woman were detained in Iran. The man was released but the woman, Leila Mohammadi, was arrested and is believed to be behind bars in Evin prison....

Earlier this month, the authorities confiscated 6,500 Bibles as they were being transported in the north-western province of Zanjan.

CSW reports that Dr Majid Abhari, adviser to the social issues committee of the Iranian parliament, declared that Christian missionaries were attempting to deceive people, especially the youth, with an expensive propaganda campaign. He also indicated his belief that all religions are strengthening their power to confront Islam.

Rhetoric has turned increasingly anti-Christian in recent months, with one official saying Christians are like the Taliban and "parasites"....

# Dates for your Diary . . . . .



*Please pray for Keefe and Faith Owen at Tredegar and their three children.*

## **Circuit**

Sunday 16 Circuit Big Sing at Ebbw Vale 4 p.m.

## **Whole Section -**

**Sectional review meeting 20 October 7:30 p.m. at  
Llanelly Hill**

## **Castle Street**

13 Thursday 7:30 p.m. Leadership Team

18 Tuesday 7:30 p.m. Churches Together

23 Sunday 2 p.m. Baptism of Tanaka

## **Advance Notices -**

6 November Sunday 10:30 a.m. Shoe Box Service

13 November Sunday 9:30 a.m. Short Service and then processing to the Cenotaph

## **Tredegar**

Sunday services: 11 a.m. (including junior Church) and 6 p.m.

Wednesdays 7.00 p.m. Mid week Bible Study, fellowship and prayer.

26 September 7.00 p.m. Christians Together Meeting: in Siloh Chapel.

9 October There will be a meal at the Church after the Harvest Festival Service. All produce brought to the Church will be given to Victory Outreach.

14 October 7.00 p.m Church Council Meeting in the Church.

**Advance Notice -** 27<sup>th</sup> November 6.00 pm : From Darkness to Light-  
A joint Churches service held at St Georges.

## Llanelly Hill

**Advance Notice** – Palm Sunday 2012 Come back to Church Sunday - start praying!

### Church Councils in October

Castle Street 6 October 7:30 p.m.  
Clydach 4 October 7:30 p.m.  
Glasbury 10 October 7:30 p.m.  
Llanelly Hill 3 October 2.00 p.m.  
Tredegar 14 October 7.00 p.m.

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**British summer time ends  
2.00 a.m. 30th October.**



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