

[View this email in your browser](#)

---



# VISION IN FOCUS

---



## Introduction

This month we take a look at the social justice branch of our diocesan vision and how we are committed to 'serving together to strengthen our communities.'

Loving our neighbour means looking out for all, whoever they may be! This often calls us to look out for those who are vulnerable and in most need, serving our whole communities, and challenging injustice where it arises.

We take a look at the amazing social outreach work being done in Newport North West Ministry Area and a mission area in St Asaph, where social action has grown congregations - and it started with beer cans!!

Schools are also fantastic at reaching out to the community and we feature Llantilio Pertholey Primary School, where they have launched a 'community cabin' to help with the cost of living crisis whilst also helping the environment.

But all these projects need people-power to get them up and running and that's where our amazing volunteers play their part! Volunteers Week runs from 1-7 June - so what a perfect time to celebrate the contribution they make and say 'thank you'!

*Debra Goddard  
Diocesan Communications Officer*



The social justice branch of our diocesan vision looks at different aspects of what this means...

- To prayerfully promote and demonstrate fairness as we share our faith through words and actions within our communities
- To challenge economic inequality and to speak out against injustice wherever it arises
- To develop congregations that know their community well and actively work with others in identifying and meeting needs

- To help our church and community schools explore through faith what it means to be ethical and informed citizens of Wales and the world

Let's have a look at how this is being developed across the diocese...

---

## Being more than 'church'

Being 'church' is not enough - we need to bring people to God too.....

The letter of James in the Bible is a fascinating one. There are lots of things in this fairly short book about the importance of living out the words we speak. One short passage has caused lots of controversy over the years :

*What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Surely that faith cannot save, can it? If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. **James 2:14-17***

I don't think this seems controversial today because there is a wide recognition that if we're not very practically caring for those in need, if we're not seeking to work for justice and peace and if we're not being clearly seen as doing good in our communities, then we're really not 'being church'.

In the real sense of course, 'being church' is absolutely enough. That means trying to live like Jesus, trying to care in the way he cares, to love in the way he loves, to welcome in the way he welcomes. That is what much of our social action work is about and it is wonderful!

The church is a powerful presence in terms of offering social action, sometimes in big projects, but very often in doing work which is not noticed widely but hugely important to those benefitting from it. We all owe a huge debt of gratitude to the people who do so much in sharing God's love in a practical way.

But I want to add a bit too. As Jesus was tempted in the wilderness to make some (probably desperately needed) loaves of bread, he replied, *One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God **Matthew 4:4***

So what I want to say is that we desperately need to carry on doing the good social action work that we're doing. We need to do more if and where we can! But we also need to remember that our motivation as Christians is to help reveal God's love. And it has to be ok to sometimes tell people that as well.

We certainly don't make any of our 'good work' dependant on people listening to a gospel message, or responding to that message, but let's not be afraid to tell people why we're doing it. After all, this is good news to share! Too often though we hide it away in our good works assuming that people will notice or work it out for themselves.

Let's be confident that we have a message to share that is relevant – a message that is life transforming in a wonderful way. And when we're doing the wonderful and absolutely essential work of sharing God's love in very practical ways, let's also think how we can gently but confidently share something of our motivation and tell people the stories of our faith and invite others to see how that might work for them!

**Archdeacon Ian Rees**

---

## **Social action that grows congregations**

During his Address '*Moving at the Speed of God*' at our Diocesan Conference, Bishop John Lomas shared his story of how clearing beer cans resulted in him building a church in a churchyard he didn't know he had! Being at 'the right place at the right time' created a thriving church where social action is growing congregations.

So, where did it start....?



and Brecon

The Rt Revd John Lomas, Bishop of Swansea

St Peter's Church in Holywell, St Asaph Diocese is now over 15 years old and is going from strength to strength!

From the £2 Food Club (The Table) which began during the Coronavirus Pandemic to playing Santa at Christmas by offering people the chance to pay just £2 to choose a number of presents for children in their family, the church has grown its congregation through social action.

Fr Dominic Cawdell, Vicar of Holywell and Greenfield & Leader of the Holywell Mission Hub, said: "The Table has become central to the life of St Peter's over the last three years, and we have adopted as our mission statement '*Bringing the heart of God to the heart of Holywell*'. Our social action, providing a free community meal, access to the pantry, and other forms of pastoral and practical support, has changed the perception of St Peter's in our town and brought us into the heart of the community. We have around 200 people coming to the Table most weeks, and this has overflowed into other aspects of our life.

"However, this has only led to growth in our churches because we have been explicit about telling people the Gospel – principally through the Bread of Life Service, a simplified Eucharist with an evangelistic talk which is always held before the Table opens. Here we root our community outreach firmly in Christ – who welcomes all people to his table. We have become more confident in proclaiming the Gospel – including the challenge to repent and turn your life around – and have seen people come to living faith through this ministry."

The £2 Food Club, which was re-launched as The Table, started life as a place where people could buy food up to 15 items of food and hygiene products for just a few pounds – but it has turned into much more! Given the number of people who were beginning to ask questions about faith, the Bread of Life service was launched. The Bread of Life congregation meet every Monday for a simple Eucharist followed by The Table which includes a free lunch and the opportunity to shop in the pantry. Roughly 200 people attend The Table each week and the Bread of Life Service has also grown to over 80 people each week, most of whom have no previous church connection. The congregation at the neighbouring church has also tripled from its pre-covid average. Coupled with this, the number of confirmations being held in the Holywell area is the largest for many years!

The emergence of this new congregation has resulted in St Peter's being designated a hub church for mission – a shining example of '*Moving at the Speed of God*' and being in the right place at the right time!

---

**Nine days of mission**





Newport North West Ministry Area has just completed its inspirational Nine Days of Mission!

From litter picks to residential home visits to 'pop-up' communion and gifts of thankfulness for those who help in our communities – it really has been a special time.

But even throughout the rest of the year, the five churches which make up the ministry area do amazing work contributing to social justice, both locally and further afield.

Team Vicar Revd Liz Houghton, said: "The ministry area covers communities where the cost of living crisis has added further to the existing deprivation. However, the amazing people of Newport North West stepped out into faith, not just to support their own communities, but many others nationally and internationally."

Nine Days of Mission is becoming an annual event and highlights just some of the amazing out-reach work carried out by the ministry area which makes a huge difference to communities.

Revd Liz, said: "We have made a commitment to Fairtrade; donations to the food bank, as well as giving time to serve as volunteers; helped with fundraising for defibrillators and raised money for Toy Box Birth certificates Appeal, helping the 'invisible' children of Latin America.

"We work closely with our communities to identify need. This includes donating Christmas presents, bags of hope, Easter egg donations etc. Some of our local schools nominated families in need, and we asked for donations to buy specific gifts for these families. Gifts were labelled with what they contained, so that parents or carers could give the gifts to their children from them. We also run a 'swap shop' for clothes and toys."

Another innovative scheme is the 'Friday night fake-away'!

Revd Liz explains: "Monthly recipe bags are supplied to one of our schools. One of our congregation is a chef and kindly creates a budget recipe for a family, shops, then produces a video of the recipe being made. This helps families learn to cook together, both those who receive the food bags as well as those who don't as the video is accessible to everyone on-line."

Gwaith rhyfeddol!

---

## Volunteers' Week 2023: Celebrate and Inspire



# #VolunteersWeek

This year marks the 39th year of Volunteers' Week (1-7 June), when thousands of charities and voluntary organisations recognise the contribution volunteers make across the UK.

With this year's theme of 'Celebrate and Inspire' we hope to encourage people to be the change that we want to see and get involved in volunteering in whatever way works for them.

Many of the social action projects which are happening across our diocese and beyond wouldn't thrive without the drive and enthusiasm of teams of volunteers.

However, the contribution of volunteers is often unseen and unrecognised by many, visible only through the incredible impact of their volunteering, so taking the time during Volunteers' Week to celebrate their efforts and all they contribute to our local communities, the voluntary sector and society as a whole has never been more important.

So, we would just like to say.....



---

## What does social action look like for our schools?

An Abergavenny primary school has set up a 'Community Cabin' to help tackle the cost-of-living crisis and reduce waste.

Llantilio Pertholey Primary School uses a timber 'stable' style cabin as a swap shop for clothes and uniform - and even plans to use some of the space as a 'community fridge' where people can collect donated food and set up a home-grown vegetable exchange at the school.





Headteacher Helen King with just some of the donations at the Community Cabin

The 'Community Cabin' only opened on the last day of term before the Easter holidays, but headteacher Helen King has said it has already proved its worth.

She said: "It has really taken off since we opened on the last day of the spring term, and it has been really well-received and we've also had people using it who aren't anything to do with the school as it is there for the community.

"We've been staggered by the response, there have been amazing donations of clothing and people have been going in to take clothes out as well so it has been really good."

The idea for the swap shop came after the whole school took part in a 'Our Planet/Our Future' project, in which pupils learned about sustainability and the wasteful nature of the fashion industry.

"They learned about clothes and how they are made and how clothes can be worn for one season and then thrown away," said Ms King.

The headteacher, who has now added sorting through donated clothes and hanging them on rails for every year group to her list of duties, then hit on the idea of applying for funding for a project after attending a Monmouthshire council run workshop on tackling poverty.



The school was awarded £70,000 from the Welsh Government for two projects which included the community cabin and funding a community theatre group to run weekly after school sessions and on-going work to create an amphitheatre in the school grounds for community use.

Before setting up the uniform and clothes swap shop Ms King sent a survey to parents which showed concern at uniform costs. The head said the need to reduce waste can also help address any stigma around accepting, second-hand donated items.

“I asked parents if it was a facility they would want and whether that was for environmental reasons or the cost of uniforms,” she said. “The results were a very mixed bag some wanted to use it for both reasons and some for sustainability reasons.

“I was also aware as well some parents don’t want to highlight they are struggling and we realised highlighting the environmental issues can get around that and lessen any stigma.

“Children also grow so fast at our age so we’ve had donations of brand new clothes and it looks like a shop in the cabin, it has light and power, as I didn’t want it to look like a jumble sale but a nice place to go.



“The children have also been on board from the start and have designed posters that are used in the cabin and around the school.”

Ms King said the next step, following advice from the council officer in charge of tackling poverty, is to stock fridges with food that can be taken for free but in the meantime it is intended to take up a parent’s suggestion of vegetable exchange.

“If parents are growing vegetables in their garden and have grown too many broad beans then they can bring the excess here and swap them.”

Though Monmouthshire is often seen as a prosperous county, and has lower levels of deprivation than many areas of Gwent, Ms King described the school’s catchment, on the northern edge of Abergavenny, as “mixed” and said demand for free school meals has increased.

What an excellent example of social action - Da iawn!

---

For a downloadable and printable version of this email please click [here](#)

---



## Diocese of Monmouth · Esgobaeth Mynwy

Diocesan Office, 64 Caerau Road, Newport, NP20 4HJ  
01633 267490 · [monmouth.churchinwales.org.uk](http://monmouth.churchinwales.org.uk)

Monmouth Diocesan Board of Finance is a company registered in England and Wales.  
Company no: 003489945 · Charity no: 1067653



---

Want to change how you receive these emails?  
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe](#)

Grow your business with  **mailchimp**