



Y GADWYN

(The Link)

News of the Toronto Welsh Community

May/Mai 2018

Christians in a World of Fanaticism

On Sunday, April 29, while many of Dewi Sant members were in Kingston, I spoke about the conversion of the Paul. His story began with these words from Acts 9: “But Saul [for that was Paul’s Jewish name], still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord...” Later, as you remember, on the road to Damascus Paul encountered the risen Christ, and was subsequently baptized, becoming an ardent apostle of the Christian church. Those who were present at Dewi Sant told me that I should repeat this homily. At least allow me to quote some key passages from it.

“Breathing threats and murder” – with those words we immediately entered in my homily into the world of religious fanaticism, which still exists to this very day. I want to share some insights into this problem of fanaticism which infects even Christians in this twenty-first century.

First, let me focus on anti-Semitism. Acts against the Jewish people in Canada still occur. Certainly the Christian church has to struggle very hard with its own record of anti-Semitism. For too long we have ignored our Jewish roots, misinterpreted our Jewish Christ, and failed to understand the dynamics at work in the writing of our New Testament. What we must remember is that the New Testament was written at least a generation after the death of Jesus, and it was written by Jewish Christians who were in conflict with fellow, orthodox Jewish believers, especially Jewish religious authorities. So, even though, in our Bible there are arguments against Judaism and even unfair judgements about the Jews and their leaders, in some ways it was really a family fight. The New Testament should not be read as giving a rationale for anti-Semitism.

Secondly, let me focus on the negativity that some Christians heap on people of different sexual orientations. There are certain types of Christians who carry signs against people who are not straight in their eyes, signs that say “God hates fags.” As a result gay people have been beaten up, even killed. And some have seen no choice for themselves except to commit suicide.

The Canadian Christian, Michael Coren, writes frequently in the Toronto newspapers and in *The United Church Observer*. In a long article in *The Globe and Mail* (March 31, 2018), he notes that so many Christians are committed to a religion that is “a clinical, harsh code of right and wrong,” and that completely overlooks the emphasis of Jesus on things like love and mercy. He notes that Jesus himself said not a word about homosexuality, or even abortion (which is another matter right wing critics attack, even if pregnancy is the result of rape), and he was “far more concerned with justice and acceptance [and] praised and loved the poor and marginalized...” Nevertheless many conservative and fundamentalist Christians see Christian love more as a strict moral code about how to behave with the niceties of specious virtue.

Recently, Marilynne Robinson, an American novelist who calls herself a Christian humanist, was in Toronto. In an interview she champions Christianity while “rejecting its legalistic, often cruel right wing” (*The Globe and Mail*, Saturday, April 21, 2018). She states that the churches that deny equal marriage, that are hostile, deprive themselves of any realistic understanding of humanity, of people who want acknowledgement and respect. In that sense it is systemic rudeness, a kind of self-righteousness.

Finally, religious people need to stop making monopoly claims for their own faith. Especially religions that base their faith on an unquestionable book. This is true for ultra-orthodox Jews with the Torah, ultra-conservative Muslims with the Koran, and fundamentalist Christians with their Bible. Let me tell you something that, for me, is of prime importance as a Christian. I revere the Christian Scriptures. I think they

The following Sunday we heard about *married* people in the Bible, focusing on Mary Magdalene to whom the first resurrection appearance of Jesus is made. Mary recognised the risen Jesus after he called her name and she was told “Do not hold me, Mary...[soon] I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” In other words, the reality of Easter is not just about some historical person named Jesus of Nazareth who is dead and gone - the message of the risen Christ is that the reality of



God’s presence and power is alive and present for everyone now and on into the future. The Christ who was alive in Jesus is the Christ alive in you. Don’t cling to the past story. It’s told to impel us all into our future. The story goes on, in Mary and in you and in me.

Another service homily saw Scrooge inserted into the Easter story (instead of the Christmas story) wherein he was visited by three spirits: the Spirit of Easter Past, the Spirit of Easter Present, and the Spirit of Easter Yet to Come. With each one he went on a journey that changed his mind and heart, in the same way that Easter is a time for us to re-examine our minds and hearts.

Using the Acts (of the Apostles) we read about Peter and John going to the Temple in Jerusalem and curing a lame man at the temple gates with the words “I give you what I have; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk”. A reminder that even today exceptional events occur through the words, the touch, the action, of individuals and groups.

The Editor

IN MEMORIAM

Geraint Jones

Last month we asked you to send in any memories or stories about Geraint Jones, who was involved in the Welsh community in Ontario and Canada and in the church community at Dewi Sant for so many years. Here is one:

Ydym yn byw yn Antigonish , Nova Scotia ers 1979 ac ydwyf yn dal a diddordeb mawr yn Dewi Sant. Oedd priodas Mike a minnau [Beryl Jarman] yn capel Dewi Sant 1974...Mis Rhagfyr. Oedd Elwyn Hughes yno amser hynny ac hefyd Lyn Jones wrth yr organ! Braint oedd cael Lyn a Geraint yn cymeryd rhan yn ein priodas.

Oeddwn yn drist iawn i clywed gan Lyn ar y ffon fod Geraint wedi marw rhai wythnosau yn ol. Mae gennyf atgofion mawr o Geraint a Lyn yn ystod 1973/4 pan oeddwn yn cyrrhaedd Toronto fel nyrs ifanc. Oeddwn yn mynd i Dewi Sant yn fuan ar ol cyrrhaedd ac yn cofio y CROESO cynnes gan Geraint a Lyn bob tro.

Wedi symud i Nova Scotia yn 1979 oeddwn yn mynd yn ol i Toronto at ffrindiau bob hyn a hyn .

They also performed a special song about coming from Wales and going on tour in Canada which featured the memorable sing along chorus: “Canada has a beaver, Furry and sweet, The cutest of rodents, You ever will meet”.



The 67 choristers contributed so much to the success of the evening, finishing with one of the songs frequently sung on the terraces of the Cardiff Blues' rugby pitch - Tom Jones' famous "Delilah".

Côr Y Gleision at the Noson Lawen



Saturday is always chock-a-block, starting with the AGM, followed by a seminar (Say it in Welsh) and then a bus trip. Donna Morris had organized a trip around historic Kingston, visiting Fort Henry and the Royal Military College. Meanwhile President Julie Wenz had arranged a Welsh movie session showing films such as *Dark Horse* and *The Baker*.

During the pre-concert Banquet we honoured this year's winner of the Gold Award, Alison Lawson. She was presented the Award by last year's winner, Betty Cullingworth. Merched Dewi and friends serenaded Alison with words written by Betty and set to Llwyn Onn. Thanks to Alan Thomas for being ever ready to accompany us, whatever the request.



Betty Cullingworth, last year's Gold Award winner



Merched Dewi and friends performing at the banquet for Alison Lawson



Alison Lawson this year's Gold Award winner

Then off to The Spire for the Grand Concert. Superb! Y Gleision were singing as enthusiastically and with as much verve and passion at the end of the evening as when they started. Their repertoire was varied and interesting and Richard brought out the best in them. A wonderful event. Diolch o galon.



The main event of the weekend is the Gymanfa and of course the singing was superb. Our organist, Alan Thomas, commented later on how much he had appreciated and enjoyed working with Richard. He especially appreciated that Richard treated the Gymanfa as a performance, not a rehearsal (i.e. he didn't stop and start and "practise over and over" as some conductors are wont to do!). And Richard dealt very diplomatically with the "rebellious sopranos" who kept insisting on repeating the "Haleliwias" and the choruses!!

Richard Vaughan and Rhiannon Pritchard at the Grand Concert performing a duet, of course!

Yet again we are indebted to many people for their role in the success of the weekend. Thank you to the Rev. Dr. Cerwyn Davies for so willingly participating in the morning Gymanfa and to Ian Malcolm of Kingston who greeted us in Welsh. Rev. Meriel Simpson presided during the afternoon Gymanfa as she has now taken over as the incoming president.



The Gymanfa Ganu on Sunday at the Spire

An enormous thanks goes to Julie Wenz who has steered the Board so ably these past two years. Every Board member gave 101% effort as did many volunteers. Without you all there could be no Festival. A special thanks to retiring Board members Trish Stevenson, Donna Morris and Dave Pugh. And now we prepare for next year! Location? London, Ontario. Date? April 26-28, 2019. Choir? The award winning Côr Machynlleth - a Male Voice choir that recently won 1st prize at the Côr Cymru competition. Definitely not to be missed.

Hefina Phillips

A OES HEDDWCH? WORKING FOR PEACE IN WALES – YESTERDAY AND TODAY

By Jane Harries

(This is from Peace News, the newspaper for the UK grassroots peace and justice movement. (peacenews.info).Ed.)

So is Wales a peace-loving nation? What does our history and heritage tell us, and how are people working for peace today? The centenary of the First World War has brought a heightened awareness in Wales of the loss and waste of that war, creating an opportunity to question the ‘logic’ of war and celebrate those opposing it. Wales *does* have a peace heritage, traced back at least as far as active involvement in the ‘Society for the Promotion of Permanent and Universal Peace’ (founded in 1816), and to ‘the Apostle of Peace’, Merthyr Tydfil MP Henry Richard, who worked tirelessly to establish the principle of arbitration into international law.

In 1922, Welsh Baptist minister and pacifist Gwilym Davies, sent the first ‘Message of Peace and Goodwill’ from the children of Wales to the children of the world, an act repeated annually on 18 May ever since. In 1924, 60 percent of the women in Wales (390,296 of them) signed a petition addressed to the women of America, asking them to persuade their government to become a full member of the League of Nations, thus safeguarding peace for future generations. Later examples of Wales’ peace heritage include welcoming Basque refugee children during the Spanish Civil War, Welsh participation in the anti-apartheid movement and the march of the Welsh group ‘Women for Life on Earth’ from Cardiff to Greenham Common in 1981 – a movement that initiated the Greenham Common women’s peace camp.

However, the peace movement in Wales faces serious challenges. According to the Wales Peace Institute Initiative, 85 percent of the total area of Wales is designated by the ministry of defence as a ‘low flying area’. Military training areas are dotted across Wales and a large area of the west coast is used to test remotely-piloted drones for military purposes – an issue actively highlighted by direct action taken by members of Cymdeithas a Cymod (The Fellowship of Reconciliation in Wales). The Cymdeithas a Cymod is part of an international, spiritually-based movement composed of people who commit themselves to active non-violence as a way of life and as a means of transformation – personal, social, economic and political.

The 1924 women’s petition is currently being replicated. The women were concerned about the state of the world and they wanted peace. After all the suffering of the Great War, they wanted to see the League of Nations contributing towards a world without war. Their efforts have inspired “Heddwch Nain/Mam-gu” (“The peace our grandmothers wanted”), a project that will take their descendants into 2024. A new petition mirroring the aspirations of the 1920s is being circulated throughout Wales and its aim is to reach people of all genders and in countries worldwide. For more information on Heddwch Nain/Mam-gu, please contact: heddwchnain.mamgu@gmail.com.



Welsh women with peace petition in 1924.

(Nêst Pritchard has a petition which you can sign for “Heddwch Nain/Mam-gu”. Ed.)

11 OF THE UK'S BEST WILD PLACES – CHOSEN BY OUTDOOR EXPERTS

The Guardian recently posted this article on their website. Of the 11 sites chosen by writers, rangers and guides, two are in Wales:

Gwenffrwd–Dinas reserve, Carmarthenshire



From the start of the drive from Llandovery (the nearest town, 10 miles away), you sense that you're delving deep into the rugged heart of the Cambrian mountains, a truly undiscovered gem of Carmarthenshire. Gwenffrwd–Dinas is an RSPB reserve, set up to protect the habitat of this ancient Atlantic oak woodland. It covers 600 hectares and is best experienced on a circular walk over a couple of hours.

Initially, the trail runs alongside the still-infant Towy river, which, even in the driest season, roars across the rocks through the gorge from its

source at Llyn Brianne as it cuts through the mystical oak and alder woodland. Use the steps cut out of boulders to take on the challenge of finding the well-hidden cave of Twm Siôn Cati (the Welsh highwayman). The feeling of tranquillity and isolation is spectacular, as red kites, pied flycatchers and tree pipits soar overhead.

Alan Warner, countryside ranger

The Rhinogs, Snowdonia

Don't be put off by images of people and trains chuffing up Snowdon – Snowdonia is one of Wales' greatest wildernesses, second only to Scotland's Cairngorms in size and emptiness. My favourite part is the northern Rhinogs, where I lived for many years, and which has rugged bony peaks, high tarns and glimpses of the Irish Sea with an abundance of bronze age sites linked by a prehistoric track, recently christened the Arduwy Way.



Bryn Cader Faner is a spectacular stone circle thought to be a prince's burial cairn. From here, a network of lakes and tarns spread out and buzzards soar around the lonely granite top of

Moel Ysgyfarnogod, or hare mountain. The glacial Cwm Moch valley drives a scar to the north, descending into the precipitous gorge of Llennyrch, among some of finest examples of Atlantic rainforest in Europe. Mosses and lichen drape the sessile oaks, bilberries abound and walkers can bathe in a Narnia of waterfalls and pools.

Daniel Start, co-author of Wild Guide to Wales and the Marches

THE LAST OF THE QUEEN'S CORGIS

The Queen's last remaining corgi has died. Willow, who was almost 15, was put down after suffering from cancer, making it the first time the monarch has not owned a corgi since the end of the second world war. Willow was the 14th generation descended from Susan, a corgi gifted to the then Princess Elizabeth on her 18th birthday in 1944. The Queen has owned more than 30 dogs of the

breed during her reign. It was reported in 2015 that the Queen had stopped breeding corgis because she did not want to leave any behind after she died.

The Editor, because she used to have a corgi

UPCOMING EVENTS

CELTIC VESPERS: ROLE OF SPIRITUALITY IN OUR HEALING

Since we are Celtic I thought some might be interested to attend and bring some Welsh Celtic views.

FAIRLAWN UNITED CHURCH

Monday May 7, 2018

7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Celtic Vespers is an evening service, held in the sanctuary, in the Celtic tradition of music and prayer emphasizing the goodness and inter-connectedness of all creation. The service will feature Celtic musicians with Doug MacNaughton. There will be a jam session with the musicians in the "Birtch Room Pub" following the service. Beer, wine and snacks will be served. Bring your guitar, tin whistle, spoons, fiddle – or just listen and tap your feet! Join us in exploring the spirituality of Celtic traditions with "sounds, spirituality and suds".

CELTIC UNIVERSE

Seems to be Celtic Month.

Jordi Savall & Carlos Nunez & Friends

May 10, 2018

8:00PM

Starting at \$45.00

Venue Koerner Hall

One of early music's living legends, Spanish viol master Jordi Savall, leads his ensemble and Carlos Núñez in a special program titled "Celtic Universe." The evening will be a musical dialogue between ancient, historical, and modern traditions of north and south Europe: Ireland, Scotland, the French Brittany, Galicia, and the Basque Country. **Jordi Savall** has had a truly exceptional life and career that has produced over 120 records. His ensemble **Hespèrion XXI** is a Grammy Award winner for Best Small Ensemble Performance. Few pop stars pack the energy, virtuosity, imagination, daring, and charisma into their concerts and recordings as Galician multi-instrumentalist **Carlos Núñez**. He is the world's most famous player of the gaita, the bagpipes of Galicia, Spain's northwest, Atlantic Ocean-abutting region rich in vibrant, uniquely expressive Celtic traditional music.

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Please send in your contributions by May 28 which is the cut-off date for submissions to the next issue.

