
CYTÛN POLICY BULLETIN

OCTOBER 2020



AN UNCERTAIN PRESENT AND AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE FOR PLACES OF WORSHIP?

The ever changing regulations across Wales have made it difficult for churches of all denominations to plan their activities for the coming months. You can read a summary of the current guidance on [Cytûn's dedicated webpage](#), which is updated regularly, and Cytûn endeavours to provide helpful information to churches – although we cannot provide formal legal advice. Local churches which are part of a denomination should also make sure they keep in touch with their denominational authorities, many of whom are issuing their own guidance.

But what of the future beyond the current restrictions? **Christopher Catling**, secretary of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, and chair of the Wales Historic Places of Worship Forum – which brings together Cytûn, Cadw, individual denominations and many charities and agencies working in the field - reflects on what the future may hold.

It would be wonderful if soon every church and chapel were to hang a big banner outside saying 'We are open; come on in!'. Let us use this as an opportunity to demonstrate the value of these community buildings at a time of national reflection about the past and the future.

Some places of worship have made admirable efforts to be part of this conversation, with online services, webinars and general information about their buildings and communities to help their congregations and others feel involved and supported (see, for example, the [Gellionnen Chapel](#) website and Churches Llandaff [@ChurchcareL](#) on Twitter). Even so, the opportunity to visit real buildings for private prayer and contemplation has been sorely missed.



Tabernacl Treforys (Morryston Tabernacle):.BBC journalist and newsreader Huw Edwards, Vice President of the National Churches Trust, makes the case for better support for historic places of worship in a debate with Dafydd Elis-Thomas, Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism in the pulpit of Morryston Tabernacle.

The challenge now is to make sure that closure does not become the new normal. You don't have to be a religious person to be concerned about this. When places of worship close, we lose not only the building, we lose a focus of community life, the place that serves for rites of passage – baptism, marriage, funerals and memorial services – and for national commemorations – Armistice, VE Day, Remembrance Day. You also lose those syncretic festivals that may have pagan as well as Christian roots – Christmas and Easter, All Souls, Plough Sunday and Harvest Festival. You lose bells, flower festivals, choirs and musical recitals, a meeting space and a social place which guarantees

some friendly company once a week. When places of worship are sold, you often lose the archives, along with all manner of textiles. Pews, galleries and staircases are next, along with organ and organ loft, *sêf fawr*, pulpit, reading desks, plaques, boards and memorials, doors and panelling – many of them good examples of local craftsmanship.

The public no longer has access to the art historical and architectural features of the building, nor to the social history inherent in the memorials, nor to the churchyard with its inscribed headstones and wildlife. These buildings are, by any definition of heritage, the most significant in our communities, the embodiment of architectural, historical, evidential, associative and community

values. The Ancient Monument Society estimates that fewer than 50 per cent of listed places of worship have a comprehensive record, and there is little account of the humbler places of worship that make up the majority in Wales and that have been the backdrop to the lives of so many people for more than 200 years.



Left: Capel y Ffin, Breconshire: St Mary's church, built in 1762, has an interior filled with humble pews, pulpit and gallery, the work of a local joiner working in the vernacular style. It is partnered by an almost identical Baptist Chapel dating from 1737 located on the opposite bank of the River Honddu.



Right: Llanegryn, Meirionnydd. A grant has recently been

awarded for the scientific dating of this important medieval rood-loft, a tour-de-force of the Welsh carpenters' craft.

What can be done about this? First and foremost, we must increase the number of people in the community who care about their local church or chapel and who will work to keep the building in community use. That means flinging open the doors and inviting people in to learn about the building. Visit Wales has published the [Experiencing Sacred Wales](#) toolkit to help with this.



Maes-yr-onnen, Radnorshire. The simple but splendid interior of one of the earliest Welsh chapels, registered in 1697 after the Toleration Act (1689).

Research by the [Plunkett Foundation](#) shows that ideas for additional uses for places of worship rarely come from the church or chapel congregation itself and almost always come from the wider community. The Foundation will launch a publicity campaign later this year to encourage people responsible for looking after places of worship to be inspired by the ways in which others have enabled shops and post offices,

nursery schools, yoga classes, cafes, meeting spaces, after-school clubs, business start-up units and small business premises to be located within places of worship without detriment to their religious function.



Pennant Melangell, Montgomeryshire. NPRN 160381. This restored church has a C12th shrine and is a destination for C21st pilgrims.

Many places of worship have the potential to earn revenue from tourism, and there is no shortage of initiatives in Wales for encouraging this, from pilgrimage routes to camping barns, guided tours to music, art and craft exhibitions and even beer, wine and gin festivals. Faith tourism is worth £14 billion globally and the potential for growth in Wales is huge. The [Explore Churches](#) website managed by the National Churches Trust, is a mine of information on places of worship worth

including in your journey plans. The Royal Commission have numerous plans and photographs of

chapels and churches in our archive and on [Coflein](#). Working in partnership with [Addoldai Cymru](#) (The Welsh Religious Buildings Trust) we have created a 'virtual museum' telling the story of Welsh chapels in terms of religion, architecture, culture and society. Called [Digital Dissent: The Story of Welsh Chapels](#), the project builds on the long-running work of the Commission in highlighting the importance of chapels as a distinctive and iconic building type in Wales that contributes significantly to both our urban and rural landscapes. The full content of the Commission's Chapels Database – a total of 6,430 sites – has been made available online through the project website and virtual access to chapels owned by Addoldai Cymru has been created via Gigapixel photographic tours and laser scanned fly-throughs, thus allowing the buildings to be explored remotely by people all over the world.

Our aim is to record these buildings as they are before they are stripped of their contents and conversion to other uses – but an archival record is no substitute for a real building, and a better future by far is to keep places of worship in continued religious and community use.

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So – what next? Join the discussion at a Zoom conference *Faith in the Future?* led by the Wales Historic Places of Worship Forum on Thursday 22 October at 9.15am. Register here:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_dS7WnEyZTRSBMAd5U0H-Wg

Award to safeguard Catholic heritage and community work

£186,700 has been awarded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund to help sustain community facing churches in the Catholic Archdiocese of Cardiff.



The project will provide specific support for St Mary's Church, Newport (pictured left), St Michael's Church, Newport, Our Lady of Peace, Newbridge and St Dyfrig's Church, Treforest (the well used church hall is pictured below right).

The Archbishop of Cardiff, George Stack stated, 'St Mary's Church, our Lady of Peace, St Michael's Church and St Dyfrig's Church are immensely valuable community assets as well as being outstanding architectural 'gems' serving some of the most deprived

households in Wales. Research shows that to thrive church buildings must be both valued by and useful to their communities. With a little imagination this project will provide a template for other places of worship to follow in terms of developing sustainable volunteering and engagement. We are most grateful to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for their support'.

Underpinning the three-year project is the belief that the only sustainable way of maintaining the charity's stock of heritage buildings is giving communities the skills to maintain them. The project pivots around the conservation and protection of listed places of worship and their related buildings such as halls, presbyteries and land. Bringing communities together through shared learning, the project aims to help parishes care for both the tangible and intangible heritage of the church. Ensuring that the relevant skills are secured for the future means that generations to come may enjoy the benefits of our wonderful buildings. The project will look beyond immediate building repairs and help develop new ways of collaborative working with local communities.

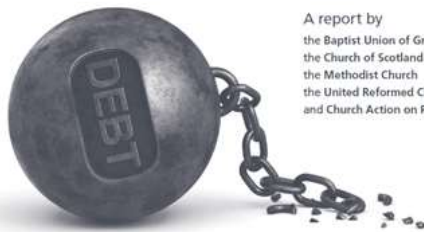


CHURCHES CALL FOR RESETTING THE DEBT

RESET THE DEBT



A fresh start for families in Britain swept into debt by Covid-19



A report by
the Baptist Union of Great Britain
the Church of Scotland
the Methodist Church
the United Reformed Church
and Church Action on Poverty

Four Cytûn member churches – the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church, supported by the Presbyterian Church of Wales – have launched a new campaign called **Reset the Debt**, in partnership with the Church of Scotland and Church Action on Poverty.

They say that during lockdown, millions of families in the UK have been forced to borrow money to make ends meet - with the biggest increase in debt amongst the poorest households.

- **Six million people** have fallen behind on rent, council tax and other household bills because of Covid-19.
- Almost **one in five households** borrowed money to buy food or other essentials in July.

They say this is an urgent problem that demands a solution. So they propose that the Chancellor create a **Jubilee Fund**, that will provide grants to pay off and cancel unavoidable debts accrued by households during the lockdown period. They believe that a Jubilee would

allow relationships to be reset, communities to be re-balanced, and people's dignity to be restored.

The report shares stories of lived experience of those trapped in debt by Covid-19, and can be found – along with videos and campaign material – at resetthedebt.uk

CLIMATE SUNDAY AND WALES CLIMATE WEEK



Climate Sunday

Welsh Government is arranging a special week of activities at the beginning of November to focus on the climate crisis and how Wales should respond. Details will be published in due course on: <https://gov.wales/wales-climate-week>

This week is timed to be a year before the big International [COP26](#)

conference in Glasgow in November 2021. The Environmental Issues Network of Churches together in Britain and Ireland has already launched an opportunity for churches to prepare for that conference, by taking part in Climate Sunday. A local Climate Sunday can be held on any Sunday until 5 September 2021. Resources are available bilingually on the [Cytûn website](#), and there are links to a cornucopia of Resources in English at www.climatesunday.org The latter is also the place to register so that everyone knows that your local church or pastorate – or local Cytûn group – is taking part. This Sunday will challenge you to worship, to respond locally (probably via the [EcoChurch](#) scheme or – for Catholic parishes – via CAFOD's [Live Simply](#) award) and sign the [Climate Coalition declaration](#) which will be presented to the COP26 conference.

Some churches have already done this, and you can hear services online from [Cardiff and Penarth URCs](#) and [Christ Church, Roath](#). We would love to know about, and publicise, other Climate Sunday services from Wales – in Welsh, English or other languages – email gethin@cytun.cymru or tag us @CytunNew on Twitter.

BAME people have been disproportionately impacted by Covid-19. This new helpline delivered by EYST, Women Connect First, Henna Foundation, ProMo Cymru and Wales TUC aims to offer a first port of call to individuals from BAME backgrounds.

- The helpline is running initially as a 6 month pilot funded by Welsh Government via the voluntary sector emergency fund.
- It is a multi-lingual helpline, between them the team speak 11 languages and interpretation can be arranged into other languages as required.
- Info is available relating to: health, work, welfare, education, housing; and personal safety.
- Not an advice line-predominantly signposting with exception of employment advice which will be delivered by Wales TUC.
- Helpline is available Mon-Fri 10.30am-2.30 pm
- Helpline number - 0300 2225720 (Local Rate calls)
- SMS text number - 07537 432416
- Website - www.bame.wales
- Email bamehelpline@eyst.org.uk



Tim Cymorth
 Lleiafrifoedd Ethnig
 & Ieuenctid Cymru



STEP BY STEP TOWARDS A NEW CURRICULUM

For five years, Cytûn has been involved, on behalf of the Faith Communities Forum, as an official “stakeholder” as a new curriculum is developed for schools in Wales. Our website contains a [briefing](#) about the curriculum, and our involvement.

On October 5, Cytûn was represented at a webinar to launch a [new report](#) by the Education division of the OECD (the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) on progress towards launching the curriculum in schools in 2022. The report, and the speakers from the OECD, note that a complete overhaul of the education system, as is being attempted in Wales, is a ten-year journey – so we are barely half way through! In answer to a question from Cytûn, they affirmed that success depends not only on involvement by all those involved in education – not least children and young people – but also by wider society. Cytûn is convinced that there are many opportunities for churches and other faith groups to add value to education in Wales and we look forward to encouraging our members to participate.

There are also challenges, which include the changes being proposed to Religion, Values and Ethics (the new name for Religious Education) and to the role of schools of a religious character (‘church schools’). Also on October 5, the Welsh Government published an [analysis of the responses](#) received to a consultation on these matters, to which Cytûn and many of our member churches and organisations responded. We await Welsh Government’s response with interest.

MONITORING WELSH LEGISLATION

Cytûn aims to enable churches and Christian organisations in Wales to work together effectively, while retaining their own distinctive ethos and beliefs. To enable this in the policy field, Cytûn

convenes the **Laser Group**, which brings together the (paid and unpaid) policy officers of our member churches and organisations, and other Christian partners such as the Evangelical Alliance in Wales. Meeting six times a year (virtually at the moment, of course), officers can brief each other about their work and monitor developments in the Senedd and Welsh Government, and developments relevant to Wales at Westminster. Much of this Bulletin reflects that work.

Amongst other issues which have received the attention of the group recently, although there is insufficient space in this Bulletin to provide full details, are:

- Assisting churches with arranging candidate Q&A sessions, briefing materials and other activities in connection with the elections for the Senedd and the four Police & Crime Commissioners in Wales in May 2021. The precise arrangements for these elections, nor the activity which will be possible around them, are not yet clear due to the Covid crisis, but it is hoped that we can arrange ways for church members to consider what political parties are proposing, and ensure Christian voices are heard in the public debate.
- The [UK Internal Market Bill](#). This Bill, which has passed through the House of Commons in Westminster and will shortly be considered by the House of Lords, has proved very controversial as it gives powers to UK Government ministers to change some aspects of the UK's Withdrawal Agreement with the EU. However, it also proposes fundamental changes to the relationship between the legislation passed by Senedd Cymru and the UK in all areas which affect the operation of the free market between the nations of the UK – including not only goods and services, but also the environment, professional qualifications, etc. Further information and links can be found in the [August/September Policy Bulletin](#). Cytûn's Wales & Europe Working Party is corresponding with a number of Lords with links with Welsh churches regarding some of the implications for devolution to Wales.
- [Legislation](#) currently before the Senedd which could imperil the right of clergy and their families to smoke in the houses which are provided to them in connection with their work (manse, vicarages, etc). We have received a promise from Welsh Government of involvement in drawing up guidance which will safeguard their position.
- Separate [legislation](#) which could restrict churches' ability to manage these properties. The Senedd Committee which has been considering the Bill has [recommended](#) that churches which provide housing for clergy should be excepted from the requirement to give six months' notice to the minister prior to repossessing the property at the conclusion of the term of service. We expect the Government's response shortly.
- [Draft legislation](#) which could affect the ability of churches to use animals in worship (such as a donkey on Palm Sunday or a pet blessing service). We have been somewhat reassured by the [Government's response](#) to the consultation that such activities will not be prohibited.



CONTACTING CYTÛN'S POLICY OFFICER

Parch./Revd Gethin Rhys - Swyddog Polisi/Policy Officer

Cytûn - Eglwysi ynghyd yng Nghymru/Churches together in Wales

Registered office: Room 3.3, Hastings House, Fitzalan Court, Cardiff CF24 0BL

Working at home during the emergency period. Mobile: 07889 858062

E-mail: gethin@cytun.cymru

www.cytun.co.uk

 [@CytunNew](https://twitter.com/CytunNew)

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