

St Francis of Assisi, Llay

PARISH NEWS

Mid – August 2024



The content in this Parish News is in addition to that in the Parish Bulletin, the Parish Website and the Diocesan newsletter, The Wrexham Clarion. If you have news or opinions of interest that you'd like to share here, would you please let our parish secretary know of them.

HMP BERWYN – VOLUNTARY CHAPLAIN

Our parishioner Brian is a voluntary Chaplain in HMP Berwyn - he visits the prison every Tuesday and Saturday and writes about his work:

On Tuesdays my first job is to look at the 'Bad News' and 'Pastoral Care' forms and plan my visits in the prison together with delivering the Eucharist to vulnerable prisoners (who cannot attend the weekly Berwyn Catholic Mass).

Pastoral Care forms are either requests from individual prisoners or follow-ups from Bad News and both involve private face-to-face meetings with individual men. As a keyholder I have access throughout the prison and can draw a radio so that I can escort prisoners to the Chaplaincy if they wish to light a candle and pray in the chapel e.g. on the anniversary of the death of a family member.

Bad News forms are made out when a family member or close friend of a prisoner has died or become terminally ill and are a daily occurrence. Chaplains are responsible for informing and caring for the prisoner in question (of any religion or none) and processing funeral arrangements or a hospital visit etc. for him to attend if agreed. The advantage of being a volunteer chaplain is that I have the time to sit with and listen to the prisoner receiving the bad news, which the regular chaplains don't necessarily have.

On Saturdays my job is to escort the chaplaincy volunteer visitors, including the priest, to the Chaplaincy for the 10am Mass as we all welcome the 40 to 50 men who attend regularly. After Mass we all have time to chat over a cuppa (provided by Berwyn) and biscuits (provided by the visitors) before the men are returned to their pads and it's all over by about 11.30am.

Volunteering in Berwyn is a very rewarding, if emotional, task and valued highly by the men. It also helps us all to remove any misconceptions we have over prison life. However, as Jesus has said, the harvest is great but the workers are few - despite the number of full and volunteer chaplains (which include several SVP conference members and local parishioners), we are always overloaded and more help is needed.

More volunteers are always welcome and if you are interested please do come along to Mass on a Saturday morning: you will need to be at Berwyn by 9:15am to give time to get through security and be escorted to the Chaplaincy which is located in the centre of the prison. Notice must be given several days in advance to arrange gate passes, so contact me first on 07976 123 738 or brian.wareing@rosewood70.plus.com.

New volunteers are allowed 3 'taster' visits before having to go through a vetting process.

DISABLED PARKING BAYS

Four disabled parking bays against the pub boundary and near to the church door have now been approved and the markings will be installed in the next few weeks.

There had been discussions about locating angled bays near to the hall entrance, but these may have been a challenge for nervous drivers, and at 30° angle would have taken up an additional boundary length of over 3 metres.

The bays will now be square, starting from the line of the church front façade and going towards the road.

PREGO

"Prego" groups are regular prayer groups led by a team of prayer guides trained in Ignatian Spirituality who meet to pray and reflect on the Sunday Mass readings for the following week. In Italian, "prego" literally means, "I pray" but is usually used to mean "you're welcome" or "thank you".

Prego groups are welcoming, ecumenical and open to all, especially those searching for a deeper meaning in life. They meet fortnightly and are led by a team of experienced prayer guides from the Diocese of Wrexham. Group members are of different ages and backgrounds: retired people and grandparents, elderly people living alone, younger people and some ordained and lay church workers.

The prayer guide opens the meeting with a time of stillness and then slowly helps the group to pray the readings, generally using Lectio Divina, that is focussing on any word or phrase in the scripture passage that catches someone's attention or silent imaginative prayer. Then if anyone wishes they can share something that occurred to them in prayer as much or as little as they want, sometimes to a small group or sometimes to the whole group, although there is no obligation to do so. Personal intercessions then follow, ending with the opportunity to share briefly on how we feel.

Our group here in Llay meets on alternate Monday evenings in the church hall; sometimes circumstances prevent people from being able to attend every session but they come when they can to enjoy an hour of quiet prayer and reflection. If you would like to see if Prego is for you, please come along and join us, without obligation. You will be very welcome!

The Outreach team working party produces a weekly "Prego" leaflet, offering reflections on the Sunday readings for group and individual use. The supplementary "Prego Plus" provides background material on the Scripture texts and are available to download and print from the following website: www.stbeunosoutreach.wordpress.com

HOSTING UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

Hosting Ukrainian refugees turns out to be an experience of very mixed emotions, with frequent but mild frustrations as our language and customs are being learnt (and often disturbingly questioned!) but this is more than balanced by the pleasure at seeing our refugees settling in and enjoying the freedoms that are so restricted at home.

Underlying this experience is the knowledge that you're providing safety from the terrifying environment that your guests have been living in – we imagine we know what it's like from watching the news, but it really comes home when seeing a guest cowering at the first sound of a plane going overhead, or watching their phone videos of incoming rockets passing their block of flats.

Almost 5.5 million refugees from Ukraine have been displaced across Europe since the Russian invasion in 2022, and the most recent figures in late 2023 record that 7,300 households were in the UK looking for accommodation - 4,740 with children, 360 without and 2,200 single people.

Our parish has a long association with Ukraine with ties going back to 1988 with a parish in Sumy close to the Russian border, and it's natural to continue this association and do what we can to alleviate the dreadful suffering that the invasion and civilian targeting is causing.

There are many organisations which would allow you to explore an interest in sharing your home with refugees, and in particular Homes for Ukraine, a government sponsored scheme, has an active department in Wrexham Council. You'll also find leaflets in the porch from the Catholic Saint John of God group which, with the Caritas Social Action network, offers a matching and support programme.

And of course, if you set out on this rewarding path, there will be a lot of help from those in the parish who have had or who currently host Ukrainian refugees.