

Stories of **HOPE**

wales
evangelical alliance
together making Jesus known



HOPE

has a name, and His name is

JESUS

Contents

Introduction p5

Our history p6

**The Evangelical Alliance
in Wales p8**

Hope for the hungry p11
Gateway Church, Abergavenny

Hope during Covid p12
Lighthouse Church, Anglesey

Hope for health p14
Garden of the Lord

Hope for students p15
Cornerstone Church, Swansea

Hope for mental health p16
Gateway Caerphilly

Hope for the vulnerable p18
St Michael's Church, Aberystwyth

Hope for wellbeing p19
River Dee Church, Flint

Hope for families p20
Messy Church, Pembroke



Welcome to Stories of Hope

by the Evangelical Alliance Wales.

The Evangelical Alliance joins together hundreds of organisations, thousands of churches and tens of thousands of individuals to make Jesus known. Representing our members since 1846, we are the oldest and largest evangelical unity movement in the UK. We walk in the tradition of the evangelicals who have gone before us including those who abolished the slave trade, those who reformed our justice system and those who championed education for all. Today, evangelicals are at the heart of initiatives such as debt counselling, street pastors, night shelters and foodbanks.

We affirm and proclaim the good news of Jesus both in words and in action. People with an active evangelical faith can be found in politics, business, education, the NHS, retail, agriculture, media, factories, law and order, sports, the arts and every other aspect of culture, and make a profound difference in our communities. Through our events, training, public policy work, resources, and publications, the Evangelical Alliance encourages the church to speak up on behalf of those who are maligned and marginalised.

At the end of 2021, we celebrated the Evangelical Alliance's 175th birthday. For us, it was a moment to pause and give thanks to God for all that He has done in and through us during that time. Looking to the future, our CEO Gavin Calver says, "This forthcoming post-coronavirus season will be as challenging as any in our history. We are committed to assisting the social and spiritual rebuilding of the UK in whatever way we can. We will do all we can to bring about evangelical unity in this season. We will speak up, in truth and love, on the issues that matter. We will seek to be the good news people who are so desperately needed."

This booklet contains a snapshot of the work of the Evangelical Alliance in Wales and a selection of stories from some of our incredible member churches and individuals who are seeking to serve and love their communities. May it fill you with hope as you read it.

Our history

Our rich history is marked by many proud moments.

1846

We started with 800 evangelical leaders at a meeting in London.

1861

Our first ever Universal Week of Prayer is launched, as only God has answers.

1914–1918

During WWI, prayer was crucial, so we organised many large prayer gatherings.

1939–1945

Through a National Day of Prayer and other significant initiatives, we advocated for refugees.

1960s

In post-war Britain, amid cultural changes, we promoted a united church confident in the gospel.

1855

With a heart for religious freedom, we began advocating for this in Europe.

1879

We raised our voice for persecuted Christians in Bohemia, and even met with the Austrian Emperor.

1918–1939

During the interwar years we supported European Christians amid a rise in communism.

1954

38,000 people come to faith at the Harringay Crusade, which we sponsored with Billy Graham.

Read our story

One Body in Christ: The History and Significance of the Evangelical Alliance (by Rev Dr David Hilborn and Rev Dr Ian Randall) traces the organisation from its

foundation in 1846 up to 2001, using previously unexplored archives: eauk.org/one-body-in-christ

1987–1992

Having identified the needs in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland, we increased our footprint, opening offices in Belfast, Cardiff and Glasgow.

2011

We took a deep dive into what it means to be an evangelical in the ground-breaking report 21st Century Evangelicals.

2014

We campaigned with Care for the Family and CCPAS for children in care, which paved the way for charity Home for Good.

2019

After four years heading up mission, Gavin Calver is appointed CEO, following on from the good work of Clive Calver, Dr Joel Edwards CBE and Steve Clifford.

2021

We celebrated 175 years of making Jesus known.

1968

This saw us establish TEARFund (The Evangelical Alliance Relief Fund) in response to famine and war.

2010

With our heart for unity, we established the South Asian Forum to bring together and support the South Asian church.

2013

To model and encourage unity amid diversity, we then set up the One People Commission.

2016

Great Commission goes live, our digital hub to inspire everyday evangelism (eauk.org/great-commission). We then collaborated with the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship on Speak Up so Christians know their legal freedoms when sharing the gospel (eauk.org/speak-up).

2020

In a year of bad news, contention, challenges and adversity, we shared the gospel, raised our voices, prayed and blessed our communities.

The Evangelical Alliance in Wales

Evangelical Alliance Wales was birthed out of Welsh church leaders' passion to see churches working together for the gospel across the nation. Arfon Jones was

appointed as the first general secretary in 1989. A gifted preacher and first-language Welsh speaker, Arfon soon gathered a team around him to focus on networking and fostering positive relationships across various evangelical traditions in Wales. Amazingly, he achieved this with just a desk and a telephone in a rented office in Cardiff city centre!

Arfon continued to lead the Evangelical Alliance in Wales until 1999. "It was a privilege and a challenge to be appointed the first general secretary of the Evangelical Alliance Wales in 1989," he told us. "There were so many highlights: the highly significant Symposium on Nationhood, Language and Culture at Aberystwyth, Spring Harvest at Pwllheli, and exciting new developments such as the National Prayer Breakfast of Wales. One could go on, but the true highlight for me was the bridge-building between various evangelical traditions and the people I had the privilege of working with."

Rev Elfed Godding then took on the mantle of leading Evangelical Alliance Wales between 1999 and 2018. When

asked what his ministry highlights had been during his tenure as director, he told us, "We had the privilege of hosting the General Assembly of Evangelicals in Cardiff in November 2001, launched with a celebration at the Cardiff International Arena which was attended by 5,000 people. Other highlights include: Waleswide – planting and strengthening churches in less-reached areas through the medium of Welsh and English; an invitation from the First Minister, Rhodri Morgan, to join the Welsh Government's Faith Communities' Forum; and regular contributions for BBC Radio Wales presenting a Christian perspective on a range of issues."

Siân Rees, current director of Evangelical Alliance Wales was appointed in January 2019. A people person, her highlight so far has been "everything relational! In 2019, we launched our regional hubs across Wales and gave key leaders, whether church leaders or bi-vocational Christians, an open invitation to speak into our work and vision. In return, I love being able to relay stories of what Jesus is doing across our nation to anyone and everyone who will listen!" Siân is a sought-after speaker at churches and conferences across Wales and beyond, both in English and in her first language, Welsh, and heads up the team in Cardiff.

The story continues here in Wales

We are relational...

Psalm 133 declares that where there is unity, God commands a blessing. Christian unity cannot take place outside of relationships, therefore we love to connect Christians to work together for the sake of the gospel. Evangelical Alliance Wales hosts roundtable discussions on matters pertinent to the day and listens well to both the church and the world around us so that when we speak up, we speak with wisdom and integrity. We want to promote evangelical unity and reflect evangelical diversity and are currently establishing the One People Commission (OPC) here in Wales. OPC will centre around fostering intercultural church unity, growing multi-ethnic churches, promoting racial justice and challenging racial injustice.

We resource the church...

Our website eauk.org is full of free resources which both encourage and equip Christians in their relationship with Jesus and help them to live out their faith. Containing theological reflections, guidance on public policy, opinion pieces, devotionals, and small group materials, our website is loaded with good news stories from across the church

which encourages Christians to share the greatest story of all. Through events, training, public policy work, resources and publications, we seek to equip Christians to make a significant impact for good in every area of public life. Our Public Leader course is an excellent example of this. Teaching and preaching will always be a key part of our work, with Evangelical Alliance Wales staff speaking at 84 churches or conferences in 2021 alone.

We represent the voice of evangelicals...

Evangelical Alliance Wales are privileged to be a part of committees and forums where we are able to speak up and engage positively on behalf of evangelical Christians. We sit on the Welsh Government's Faith Communities Forum, and consequently worked with the Task and Finish group on regulations pertaining to places of worship throughout the pandemic. We have worked extensively alongside friends at Cytûn on working groups looking at the new Relationships and Sexuality Education and Religion, Values and Ethics curricula and are a part of their Racial Justice Network. Our close working relationship with Cytûn was again put to good use as we tackled vaccine hesitancy and mistrust (see page 12) with local authorities and Track, Trace and Protect.



The Cross Party Group on Faith and the Interfaith Council of Wales have enabled us to develop positive working relationships with people of faith outside the evangelical tradition and both are an immensely positive part of our relational network.

In 2021, we launched our Connect resource to encourage evangelicals to engage positively with local and national government and we have certainly seen an increased interest from the church in terms of engaging with public policy. Evangelicals will always speak up, in truth and love, on the issues that matter and to that end, responding to consultations such as the Race Equality Action Plan, and consultations around reasonable chastisement, abortion and the new curriculum are an important part of our work. Speaking up on such issues often prompts interviews with the media and we have been able to provide these in both Welsh and English.

Hope for the hungry

Gateway Church, Abergavenny

The help and support that Gateway Church provides to the town of Abergavenny isn't merely of practical benefit to the community; it brings hope to its people – the hope of Jesus. Its volunteer-led café routinely serves free meals at their centre on Monk Street; but throughout the pandemic, when so many in their community were experiencing a variety of hardships, 14,000 meals were cooked and delivered across the town by members of Gateway Church. Last Christmas alone, the church delivered over 1,000 Christmas hampers to bless their community.

The café is used as a place to equip people with key life skills, thus providing them with a chance to flourish. The opportunity to complete food and hygiene certificates are offered to those who may be unable to find work, and there are shower and laundry facilities available for the homeless or those who are unable to pay their energy bills. This in turn, has led to an increased level of community cohesion, with local police officers often directing people who need support to the work of the church.

One person whose life has changed with the help of Gateway Church is a previously homeless man who was addicted to drugs and alcohol. Having been encouraged by a member of the congregation to visit the church café, this man found a community where he was both loved and accepted. He visited the café regularly and was able to receive rehabilitation services organised for him by the church. Having eventually overcome his addictions, the café offered him the chance to train and complete a certificate in food and hygiene. The man went on to meet a woman from a similar background to himself, who had also managed to recover from her addictions with the support of Gateway Church. They are now both committed Christians, married, and the proud parents of a baby girl. They continue to be a part of Gateway's Church family, where the man is part of the church's worship band.

Hope during Covid

Lighthouse Church, Anglesey

As Covid began to impact communities across Wales and beyond, Lighthouse Church started to explore how they could bless the island of Anglesey with a message of hope.

One idea which quickly took flight, was the production of a bilingual rendition of the song 'Stand by Me' performed by local musicians. Having reworded it to include a message of hope for the community, they complemented it with a video of Christians from across Anglesey holding signs saying that they were "Praying for Anglesey". The video, which went viral on social media, reached an estimated 16,000 people and was a powerful show of unity between churches from many different backgrounds.

As well as having an online impact, Lighthouse Church worked hard to meet the practical needs of their community by launching an initiative called 'Make Lunch Take Out' in partnership with the charity Transforming Lives for Good (TLG). This allowed them to engage with young families

predominantly from low-income backgrounds and bless them with a 'Parcel of Hope' delivery. These packages included a healthy home-cooked meal and activity packs for kids. To date, they have delivered at least one parcel to 91 different families and served a total of 832 meals, with slots being fully booked within 48 hours. This project has given them the opportunity to share the hope of Jesus with their community, and they now have great working relationships with various local services which they look forward to collaborating with again in the future.

Lighthouse is a small church in a rural Welsh context, but by praying and trusting that God moves when we step out in faith, they have seen amazing things happen. Alan and Rachel Radbourne, who run the church, told us a story of one of the young families they have met through 'Make Lunch'. After a turbulent few months for the family, including ill health, a forced home move and problems with benefits, they approached Lighthouse Church because they knew they would help. The church was able to help them move,

raise money for a new washing machine for them and provide them with a weekly food shop during moving week while they were waiting for their benefits to arrive. The church have become a trusted fixture of the community by simply feeding those in need.

“ The video, which went viral on social media, reached an estimated 16,000 people and was a powerful show of unity between churches from many different backgrounds.



Hope for health

Garden of the Lord, Cardiff

Garden of the Lord is a church community based in Tremorfa, Cardiff. As a congregation they have responded to the needs of the residents in their area for many years, but when lockdown put a stop to several of their usual activities, they found new ways to be of help.

Young families struggling with the rising cost of living, as well as mental and physical health problems, have become commonplace in their community, so at Christmas, the church sent out over 100 Christmas hampers to help families to celebrate during what has been a financially difficult time for many. They have also more recently created a space for the young people in their community by putting on a youth conference. Over the last few years, many young people have been isolated and lonely due to home learning and lockdown guidelines, so the church's efforts to bring them together again has been heartfelt.

Garden of the Lord have been instrumental in addressing a low uptake of the Covid vaccinations in parts of the black and minority ethnic communities. Alongside fellow RCCG



pastor, Pastor Ademola Agunbiade, they worked with Evangelical Alliance Wales, Cyt n and Track, Trace and Protect Wales on hosting a hybrid awareness session aimed at tackling hesitancy and the misconceptions and concerns around the vaccine. Additionally, Garden of the Lord church allowed their church building to be used as a pop-up vaccination centre. These pastors are highly respected church leaders throughout the city of Cardiff and by lending their trusted voice to the issue, saw a number of people take the vaccine who perhaps wouldn't have done otherwise.

Hope for students

Cornerstone Church, Swansea

It is widely acknowledged that many university students have experienced loneliness and isolation in recent times due to the Covid pandemic, having to endure periods of lockdown and restrictions in their accommodation halls with students they have not previously met. In light of this, Cornerstone Church's student worker Chloe Swart prioritised cultivating a sense of community among students where loneliness could be combatted and where students would no longer feel lost and alone.

One way Cornerstone Church offered community to the students of Swansea was through running 'Alpha' courses. The Alpha course is a series of sessions exploring life, faith and meaning. It is a space to explore the bigger questions of life, say what you think and hear other people's points of view. Like many churches across Wales throughout the pandemic, Cornerstone Church ran Alpha courses online over Zoom. This proved incredibly popular among students,

who valued the opportunity to make friends and explore a variety of questions that had arisen since the start of the pandemic. When restrictions began to ease, Cornerstone ran the course in a local pub, providing a relaxed and comfortable environment for those wanting to explore life's big questions.

One student recommended attending an Alpha course to her housemate, as she was going through a particularly difficult time after her friend had recently committed suicide. During the first evening of the course, the student recalled feeling comforted and supported, and was signposted to the additional support she needed. Many weeks into the course, she felt able to come to terms with her feelings and the many questions she had. Through attending Alpha, she decided to become a Christian, became part of Cornerstone Church, and now runs Alpha herself so that others might have a similar experience to her own.

Hope for mental health

Gateway Church, Caerphilly

Across the UK, mental health has been seriously impacted by the pandemic. Where support was stretched before, there are now increased waiting times for those in crisis to receive professional help. Issues are on the rise in every area of society. The more affluent have struggled with loss of jobs and large mortgage payments. In poorer areas, access to the usual support networks (such as contact with support workers and access to food supplies) hasn't been available. In all areas, people have struggled with the loss of family and friends as well as loneliness and isolation. Young people have also suffered, expressing their fears, stress and anxieties through self-harm, eating disorders and worse, with some struggling to get the help they need because of the high demand.

Gateway Church in Caerphilly runs a project called Kintsugi Hope with a number of other churches in the area. Named after the Japanese art of making beauty out of cracked pots, their vision is to help individuals bring beauty out of their past scars. They run groups to create a space to connect

with people who haven't yet had access to specialist support and try to help them move forward from the past and see hope in the future, preventing people from reaching crisis point.

**“ Kintsugi co-ordinator
Claire Hughes told us
that “providing safe spaces for
people to feel accepted, to talk
through the challenges of life, to
understand their value and God’s
love for them, and providing a
community of people to face
the future with can start to turn
things around”.**

One story that Claire shared with us was about a couple whose eldest daughter tragically ended her life. Two years afterwards, they found Kintsugi Hope. Each week, the wife would attend and go home to her husband to tell him how positive and helpful she was finding the group. She felt better equipped to deal with what had happened and had the opportunity to support others. Her husband then signed up for the course and found that it gave him the space to talk, discuss and listen to others. He had a space to think about the things he had gone through and was still going through. They found the sessions so helpful that they shared it with other grieving parents and Kintsugi Hope were able to run a group especially for parents who had lost their children to suicide.



Hope for the vulnerable

The Well, St Michael's Church, Aberystwyth

The Well is a community outreach project in Aberystwyth run by St Michael's Church. The safe space that has been created aims both to help those who are struggling, and signpost them to the support that they need. It is also a welcoming haven for people who find themselves on the outskirts of the community, providing them with a place that feels like home.

The Well is all about finding friendship and building a community where all are supported regardless of what life throws at them. Sometimes that includes sharing a meal, a game of pool, playing board games together or simply chatting and laughing.

One man who has benefitted from the love and care The Well provides came to them after losing a close family member in a traumatic accident that he witnessed. At this point, his confidence had been knocked and he felt overwhelmed by grief. Over time, he began to open up and share his experiences with others. He expressed an interest in faith and took part in 'Alpha', a globally renowned course

which helps people to explore the Christian faith through small group discussions. The man later became a Christian and as well as continuing to be a valued member of The Well community, is now part of the congregation at St Michael's church. His newfound faith and the support and community of The Well has helped him to grow in confidence, and the change in him is an encouragement to all those who know him.



Hope for wellbeing

River Dee Church, Flint

The River Dee Centre is situated right at the northeast corner of Wales in the town of Flint and its community church is recognised by the local community as a group of people who genuinely want to help others.

When the church was first started in 2006, the local area was listed on the lowest deprivation index, but thankfully the situation is no longer as dire, and the church continues to bring hope to its local community. This is outworked through various community outreaches, children's groups, visiting the elderly and establishing a project to support the homeless.

Like most other churches, River Dee Church has had to adapt its community projects in light of the Covid pandemic. However, this has not been a barrier to them finding new and creative ways to share the love of God with their neighbours. In 2021, with the help of volunteers from their church congregation, they gave out Easter gifts to local children, Mother's Day craft bags, pamper packs, cooking packs, wellbeing packs and even distributed 60 freshly cooked roast dinners to people's doorsteps!

“ River Dee Church is looking to the future with great hope and have recently been able to employ a community children's worker who will further develop their work.

The community of the church also provided practical help for a young family of five during lockdown as they looked to resettle in Wales from their native South Africa. The family have been loved and supported in this process and are now fully part of the church community.

River Dee Church is looking to the future with great hope and despite the challenges posed by the pandemic have recently been able to employ a community children's worker who will further develop their work.

Hope for families

Rob & Mo James, Messy Church

In every community there are people who have never been to church, people who are disillusioned with the idea of religion, and those who wouldn't dream of entering a church building. Rob and Mo James, longstanding personal members of the Evangelical Alliance, saw that this was true in their community and wanted to provide a place for families with young children to come and experience the Christian faith in a neutral and comfortable place. Together with a number of other leaders, they started Messy Church. Messy Church is a Christ-centred expression of church that looks very different to your traditional Sunday morning gathering. From messy craft activities to family fun and games, the aim is to encourage all ages to engage with Jesus through creativity, hospitality and celebration.

Guests at Pembroke Town Hall Messy Church enjoy a two course meal together plus a range of fun activities for the children and adults alike, such as crafts, stories, games and songs – all provided free of charge. Special events also punctuate their calendar such as beach parties and 'Picnic & Praise' at Pembroke Castle which was attended by around

500 people in 2021. Regularly throughout lockdown, while the group were unable to meet in person, the team dropped off parcels, activities and cards to the families who are linked with them. They were able to continue building relationships and connecting with those who attended by thinking outside the box.

In addition to their regular meetings and events, Town Hall Messy Church also work in schools, using Bible Society resources to retell the Christmas story. They've also had a table full of Messy Church activities at the local agricultural show, all of which have been available to attendees free of charge.

While many of the messy fun and games is a real draw for the children, parents also benefit from the group. Mo told us the story of a mum who regularly attends with her primary school aged daughter who, after being invited to her first Bible study, said that she felt like a God-shaped hole inside her had been filled and that where she once felt lost, she now feels anchored.

“ Messy Church is a Christ-centred expression of church that looks very different to your traditional Sunday morning gathering. From messy craft activities to family fun and games, the aim is to encourage all ages to engage with Jesus through creativity, hospitality and celebration.



Together making Jesus known

We sincerely hope that you have felt as encouraged and inspired as we have by these stories of hope. We would like to say a huge thank you to all those who have kindly shared their stories with us. If you would like to find out more about the Evangelical Alliance, please head to **eauk.org**



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