

# St David's Messenger

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## The Heart of Community

This month sees the celebration of two Celtic Saints, David (our patron) on the 1<sup>st</sup> March and Patrick on the 17<sup>th</sup>. Both of these Saints lived in dangerous times; the old order and stability of the Roman Empire had given way to anarchy and the rise of tribal 'War Lords'. New invaders in the form of Angles, Saxons and Jutes were arriving on the scene. Patrick, who may have been Welsh, was captured in his youth by Irish pirates who were making the most of our undefended waters. To be a Christian at that time singled you out as someone different in a world of competing pagan religions.

Despite all the danger and opposition David, Patrick and others were able to establish monastic settlements. These monasteries were nothing like those great stone ruins we visit today. The church was often small and made of wood and around it grew up all the buildings needed for community life. There was accommodation, kitchens, schools, libraries and workshops representing many different trades. In reality they had become villages, but villages with a difference, unlike the villages around they had a heart – the Church in which prayers were said

regularly throughout the day. Talking with people today I sense that many believe that we are living in dangerous times. I'm not sure how true that may be but there is certainly a breakdown in the structures that for many years have underpinned our society. Saying you are a Christian is more and more placing yourself in a minority. A worker with British Airways was suspended for wearing a cross, a long serving nurse was suspended for offering to pray with a patient. True, in this country they are not yet in fear of their lives but in certain circumstances life can be made difficult for anyone professing their faith. I started by saying we are celebrating two Celtic Saints this month, but there is one more celebration; this month St. David's is 70 years old. In 1940, one of the darkest periods of the Second World War, the church opened its doors for the first time to the people of the parish and has been ministering ever since. The Church at the centre of the Celtic Monastery offered stability and comfort to the people. It was here prayers were said not just for themselves but the whole of the community and the surrounding countryside.

That's how I see St. David's – at the centre of our community offering stability in a world that has changed much since its doors were first opened those seventy years ago. It is a place where prayers are said each week for all of the parish and its inhabitants.

Hopefully, like those Churches established by David and Patrick we are at the heart of our community. Their Churches were not the domain of a few monks but were open for all the people, men and women, boys and girls, Christian and Pagan. I would like to think we are the same, open to all, whether you are a person of faith or none.

One last character of Celtic Monasteries was their ability to grow whilst maintaining the stability the people desired and that is our challenge at St. David's as we face the next few years. It is not something we can do alone, we need God, but we also need the whole of the community and ultimately that means you.

David and Patrick did what they did because they listened to God. Who knows what each of us is capable of doing if we do the same.

Dave Chambers

*Published by the people of St David's Church for all local residents*  
*Address for correspondence: St David's Vicarage, Rocky Lane L16 1JA Tel: 722 4549*  
*[www.stdavidchildwall.org.uk](http://www.stdavidchildwall.org.uk)*