

St Francis of Assisi, Llay

PARISH NEWS

Mid-September 2025



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.

SVP UPDATE

Our Parish SVP has now been running for 10 years and is still very active, despite the fact that we are currently down to 3 visiting members. We also have 3 auxiliary members, to whom we are grateful for their prayers and financial support. The work we do is in a spirit of friendship and service and we are happy to take referrals of those in need, whatever their Faith or none.

We visit people in care homes or in their own home, where we are happy to sit and chat. Most visits are carried out in pairs and all visiting members have DBS checks. One of our beneficiaries said they really look forward to our visits, commenting that the days are so long when you are on your own. On hearing they were about to commence NHS support, another asked, "You won't stop coming, will you?" We reassured them that we will continue visiting as long as they would like us to do so. We do shopping and collect medication for some individuals and give lifts to hospital appointments and to Mass.

As Brian reported in last month's Parish News, members regularly attend Mass at HMP Berwyn, after which we have the opportunity to chat to the men. One of our members has become a voluntary chaplain, attending the prison during the week to support the chaplaincy with pastoral work and a prayer group.

Changes are afoot as we will be joining with Wrexham St Mary's Conference this month and plan to alternate meetings between Llay and Wrexham. Their numbers have also reduced and sadly their President, Peter McVeigh died in May.

If you would like to know more about SVP, please contact Eileen Evans on 07989 616872.

PARISH HISTORY

This brief history is from Taking Stock, an architectural and historical record of Catholic churches:

Llay was developed as a mining village from 1914 when The Llay Main Collieries Company drafted in a number of Irishmen to dig the pit shafts for the new pit. The village was planned with a formal layout by Barry Parker, the notable Garden City Movement architect, and developed by The Llay Housing Association from 1920. As well as houses, provision was made for the building of schools, shops, churches and chapels.

Although a site was reserved for a Catholic church, one of a number of tin-roofed timber-clad buildings which were built for the Irish 'sinkers' (as they were known) and served as their living and sleeping quarters, was to become the parish church and remained so for some thirty years. At first the church was served by priests from St Mary's Pro-Cathedral at Wrexham, then in 1928 a parish priest was appointed, and a house was made available for him in the village.

Not until 1953 did the bishop give his assent for a new church, when funds started to be raised from the poor mining families to build it. Work commenced in 1953 and the church was opened by Bishop Petit on 6 June 1954. Pictures, font, organ, candlesticks, benches and other furnishings were brought by the parishioners from the old church. The presbytery was built in 1974.

The Gresford Colliery closed in 1973, marking the end of coal mining in the area.

Memories have been recalled of the old tin church (photos of which are in the church hall corridor), of sweeping the outside before Mass, and of the collections to fund construction of the church and presbytery.

Perhaps you have a family or personal memory to share or maybe you'd like to write a small paragraph yourself, documenting your family link to our church? If so, would you please e-mail it to Sheila at mills733@btinternet.com

ST MARY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Back to school. We were delighted to welcome all children and staff back to school on Tuesday 2nd September after the summer break.

Everyone returned looking incredibly smart in their uniforms, wearing bright smiles and full of excitement to catch up with friends and get back into learning. Since returning to school, teachers have been busy getting to know their new classes. They have also been carrying out a range of assessments to gain a clear understanding of each child's skills and knowledge. This important work helps us plan and tailor learning effectively to ensure all children make the best possible progress in the term ahead.

Pupil Voice Opportunities at St Mary's In our whole school assembly this week, children were told about the exciting opportunity to put themselves forward for the upcoming Pupil Voice Group elections.

At St Mary's, we are very proud of the wide range of opportunities available for children to contribute to the development of the school and have a real influence on school life. Pupils can be nominated by their peers to become 'Messengers of Christ', chosen especially for their commitment to their faith. In addition, they can choose to stand for roles in: School Council, Eco Team, Criw Cymraeg, Cyber Stewards, Play Together Team and Super Ambassadors

Elections will take place on 23rd September, with results announced on 26th September. We know there will be lots of excitement as we look forward to finding out who will be taking on these important new roles for the coming year.

Whole School New School Year Mass We are very much looking forward to coming together as a school community to celebrate our new school year Mass on Friday 19th September. This special occasion gives us the opportunity to reflect, give thanks and ask for God's blessing as we begin the year ahead with hope, joy and faith.

We are grateful to Fr Nicholas, who will be celebrating the Mass for us, and to Deacon Michael for his presence and support. We truly appreciate their continued support, guidance and prayers as we begin this new academic year together.

ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC AND ANGLICAN HIGH SCHOOL

St Joseph's GCSE results 2025 were excellent as usual with 94% A-C and 41% A*-A grades achieved. The pupils out-performed Wales in all areas of the core curriculum and St Joseph's was the top performing school in Wrexham and the surrounding areas. In fact, it was the only school in North Wales to be ranked in the top ten best performing schools in all of Wales with the other nine being in Cardiff, Swansea and the Vale of Glamorgan.

We are very proud of our pupils and of the dedication and commitment shown by members of staff who encourage excellence. Some of the proudest moments on Results Day in August came about when some of our less able pupils achieved pass grades in their GCSE's, helping them to meet the challenges of their next steps in life.

Senior Pupils As the new school year begins, we have newly appointed Head Girls and Boys. The appointment of senior pupils takes place at the end of Year 10 and is a rigorous one.

Those pupils who wish to nominate themselves for the roles write a letter of application outlining their commitment to, and participation in, school life generally throughout their last four years and in particular in the religious life of the school, maybe through participation in school liturgies, assemblies, hunger lunches and charities. A short-list is drawn up and the pupils are interviewed by a panel of senior staff and governors. The senior prefect team are then appointed to roles of Head Boy and Girl, Deputies and Assistants.

Our senior pupils take on the challenge of representing the school at public functions and addressing parents and pupils at school events; they are role-models for the whole school, leading by example.