

MOUNT ZION BAPTIST CHURCH



"Our mission is very much about living Christian values, not much at all about, preaching," says the Revd Chris Lewis, the minister at Mount Zion, in Bonymaen, east Swansea.

The lower Swansea Valley is an historic place, in the Industrial Revolution it became the world centre for the production of copper and was important for other industries. History has consequences; how do you minister to a post-industrial area with a fair bit of deprivation, in which it has taken half a century to restore a devastated and poisoned landscape? Chris brings the experience of workplace chaplaincy to this ministry.

Mission ... all about living Christian values

He continues, "It's about being with people in a community, sharing their experiences, hardships and good times. For much of my ministry, over a quarter of a century now, I have been a 'tent making' minister. I knew at college this was the kind to which I was called. Having your feet on the ground, the experience of work, no work, and sharing a degree of insecurity means I can look people in the eye with honesty.

"What the Home Mission grant has enabled me to do, by buying a day a week of my time, is to join in with important things that will make a difference. I hope it's building a profile for Mount Zion and the Christian faith.



"The *Swansea Bay Fair Credit Campaign* is perhaps our biggest visible success - and I'm saying this two days after the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) announced their cap on pay-day loan interest rates. I've done what I can to support the campaign, mostly through strategic work; the people whom I really admire are the victims - neighbours of ours who've had the humility and courage to say that the hundred pound loan left them with a six hundred pound bill, that sort of thing.

"The *Swansea East Side Food Bank* (which is based at Mount Zion) is not just a church initiative; it involves our community and us together. People from the area turn up and help week by week. Some have begun to speak of the chapel as 'theirs' even if they don't come to services. There's political support too; our councillors are trustees and volunteer along with us and the vicar of Glantawe. Our Welsh Assembly Member (AM) turns up in person with boxes of

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food he's collected, and appeals to local workplaces have been handled with great effectiveness by Carolyn Harris, from the Swansea East Constituency office. It all builds connections and helps those who need it.

"We have a bit of garden at the chapel, so we can give some fresh vegetables to people who come to the food bank and we give and receive seeds, seedlings, herbs, advice and ideas.



"Scratch the surface and you find initiative and talent. Quite unexpectedly, for me, we gathered a group of teenagers. They wanted to put on a show to support the foodbank. I wrote them a play about Bonymaen in 1840, entitled *Copperopolis*, and they brought it off brilliantly.

"A series of sketches to be performed in a Christmas carol service followed. Besides this, a pastoral relationship is growing with them and some of their parents.

"Looking to their futures, three of them went to see Oxford. As a member of that university, naturally, I was interested. I got a text from one of them to the effect that we had all encouraged her to broaden her horizons. I was touched. The message is about abundant life."

Chris Lewis
Minister,
Mount Zion Baptist Church



Please pray:

» For Chris and the members of Mount Zion Baptist Church, Bonymaen as they live out their Christian faith

» For everyone involved in the Swansea Bay Fair Credit Campaign, giving thanks for all that they have achieved already on behalf of others

» For the Swansea East Side Food Bank, based at Mount Zion, giving thanks for the way in which it has brought together so many people and organisations