

# Sharing Our Story...

## New Park St EBC Holyhead, North Wales



**Revd. Deb Stammers, minister of New Park Street English Baptist Chapel in Holyhead, North Wales, shared something of the church's mission in conversation with Suzie Abramian...**

"Gardening, mission and Zoom might not sound like 3 words that would naturally fit together but for one church on the Welsh Island of Anglesey they are discovering how God can use the most surprising ways to build his Kingdom. Deb Stammers is part-time minister at New Park St, Anglesey and, since her official appointment in September 2020, says how difficult traditional ways of engaging with the local community have been due to the Coronavirus restrictions.

However, over the last year this small church started to push outside of their familiar comfort zone by choosing to use Facebook to hold live services and prayer gatherings, gradually becoming acquainted with the different technologies. For these events they noticed that Zoom meetings wouldn't work, in part due to the lack of good internet on the island and because many in the local community only having access to online engagement through their phones. Deb comments how Facebook is an 'open space,' allowing those outside of church to join in or at least see what is happening. Whereas Zoom is more 'a closed room,' perhaps more suited for intentional discipleship and deepening relationships. Interestingly, the church has also found ways of still engaging physically such as by choosing to invite people from their local community to an online Nativity service in Christmas 2020 by posting over 500 Christmas cards through people's doors, a way Deb says of giving a tangible reminder that the church is still there and alive even if it looks closed.

They have recently taken these initial ventures of developing a more missional presence through an online platform a step further, when one church member felt God leading her to use her skills in organic gardening to help others with growing their own vegetables, seeing this as something that would connect with the recent rise in people's interest to be outside, care for the environment and above all, to be a connection point for faith. So called, 'Tiny Garden Church' the vision is for each person who attends, currently meeting on Zoom, to be tending to their own tiny garden space of a 1m square raised bed which people are encouraged and shown how to make from scratch. Each week, the group meets they are shown what they can be doing in their miniature garden as well as sharing together how their individual growing is developing. Whilst this could be held as an ordinary gardening club online, Deb stresses how their intention is, 'to do this within a context of worship and prayer... there is no disconnect between the sacred and the secular.' There is a time of prayer as part of the session and a monthly more intentional worship time, and some time in the Bible, particularly in relation to gardening and using resources from the 'Muddy Church' network (see [www.muddychurch.co.uk](http://www.muddychurch.co.uk)).

Encouragingly, although this missional adventure hasn't been running long, a real mix of people have already attended from the local community, some from other churches and some, Deb admits she doesn't quite know yet herself! Deb confesses that like many pioneering ideas she wasn't initially sure how this would work or even who would attend but she also asserts how she felt God's leading through it all and was also greatly encouraged that the leading came from someone else within the congregation who is listening and being obedient to God. 'It doesn't just have to come from the minister or the deacons.' Like the very seeds planted in these new gardens, there is always some element of the unknown involved when stepping out into God's mission but in this case, Deb notes how there has been an encouraging willingness to take that risk and be led by God into his plans.