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Welcome to Wales

Wales is a land of great beauty especially in its scenic coastline and stunning mountains. But it is also a land where the blessing of God has been known to a remarkable extent down the centuries

Even for the visitor, the evidence is there with innumerable churches and chapels, statues, memorials, and Celtic crosses. It is there also in place names. Those beginning with *Llan* – over 500 of them – refer to enclosed land on which a church was erected, often as long ago as the 6th century. *Llan* is usually followed by the name of the person who planted the church or perhaps to whom it was later dedicated. *Bangor* ('A church surrounded by a hedge'), *Betws* ('House of prayer'), *Capel* (Chapel), and *Eglwys* (Church) are also common elements in place names. Other places – such as the biblical names Bethesda, Bethlehem, Nazareth – come from the local chapel, reflecting the significance of the chapel at the heart of the community.

However, the influence of Christianity goes deeper still. Welsh became a distinct language during the 'Age of the Saints' in the 6th century, a time of spiritual revival in Wales. The 1588 Bible

ensured its survival by providing standardized vocabulary and linguistic patterns, together with potent imagery for preachers and writers. From its origins in the 6th century, Welsh literature has been dominated by Christian writers and themes.

Time and again powerful spiritual movements have had a far-reaching effect on the social, cultural, and political life of the nation. Christians such as David, William Morgan, Griffith Jones, Howel Harris, Williams Pantycelyn, and Thomas Charles are regarded as among the most important figures in Welsh history.

This guide introduces a few of the people and places associated with the fascinating and often exciting impact of Christianity on Wales. It will also take you on an enthralling tour of a beautiful land where the reality and vitality of the Christian faith have been clearly and powerfully evident.

