

Welcome to the 2014 Salem Home-Coming Croeso Cynnes I Bawb

Croeso cynnes i bawb. A warm welcome to everyone.

First, some words of gratitude. Reverend Davis, thank you for coming to conduct the service. Carol Ellis, thank you for directing the Gymanfa Ganu. Thanks to Jan Davis for generously offering to handle the newsletter and program for one last year. Thanks to Ann and Bob Makin for keeping this building safe and secure. Thanks to Barb Evans for handling the tables and tents. Thanks to Brian Medellin for putting together Salem's first pig roast. Thanks to Mary Jeane for preparing the communion. Thanks to all my fellow board members. Thank you all for travelling from far and wide. This day wouldn't have happened without us all working together.

I am so happy that we have all been able to come to the Salem Homecoming today. But the path we have followed to get here was much longer than a morning drive and it was much harder than the dirt road coming in. This day has taken 175 years to arrive. This day has come from Welsh great-great-great-great grandparents, who crossed an ocean for the promise of America, and so many of their descendants, who, every year, come back to the small country church built on this ancestral land. This day has arrived thanks to generation after generation of new members who rediscover the spirit of Salem. This is the journey that has brought us today's reunion.

And that is the word which best captures what I think Salem is all about...reunion. Or in Welsh, *adundeb*.

I should say, if this is your first time attending the Salem Reunion, and your Welsh just isn't as good as it used to be...before I prepared this speech, I admit I also had a hard time remembering the zero Welsh words I knew. I've also probably butchered the pronunciation of every single word I've attempted to speak so far, and I plan on butchering hundreds more at the Gymanfa Ganu later.

My point is, yes, this day is about reconnecting with the story of the Welsh settlers, from whom many of us are descended, and who were so numerous here that they named the county, Cambria, the Latinized version of *Cymru*—also known as Wales. But, more broadly, it implies the immigrant story, the history, that every American has to tell and wants to remember. An Irishman, but a fellow Celtic, named Edmund Burke once said, "People will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors." Salem is important because it is an embodiment of that, and because it has been carrying its tradition forward for so long.

Since 1839, when a group of Welshmen and Welshwomen founded this church, Salem has been celebrating Welsh heritage. From mother to child, from cousin to

cousin, from grandfather to grandson, the enduring Cambrian traditions established by the founders have been handed down through families over many lifetimes.

As you may know, the Bible is rife with genealogies: Jebediah who begat Obadiah who begat Zachariah and so on and so forth.

Chronicles is called Chronicles for good reason, it's 65 mind-numbingly boring chapters chronicling the grandsons, and great-grandsons and great-great grandsons of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were so many family lineages, it took two whole books of the Bible get them all.

But these are there because Scripture means to capture two powerful ideas. One, that each of us is the child of hundreds of mothers and fathers before us; we are the culmination of all the lessons, traditions and beliefs that have been fostered over generations. And two, we own the great responsibility of protecting all that our ancestors have made for us. We are swaddled in the patchwork quilt of civilization thanks to the blocks sown together by our ancestors: pioneers, folk artists, coalminers, sermonizers and seamstresses. Every generation must diligently mend, renew and add on to the quilt.

I welcome you today, as the Salem church completes a milestone swath of its own quilt, but also begins sewing the next segment of its very rich heritage.

Allow me to finish with a verse from Hebrews, Ch. 7, "...king of Salem, that is, king of peace. He is without father or mother or genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues holy forever."