

Revd. Dennis Monger

born: 8th February 1926. died: 3rd March 2013, aged 87 years

Dennis loved Dore Abbey. He was so pleased to save it for worship, introducing the Services there on the first Wednesday of the month and he found Dore a great place to talk to visitors. Often using the Welsh *hwyl*, his inspiring sermons could be humorous and always thought provoking. Asked for a written copy, he showed me a few notes on a postcard telling me all his sermons were different. His memory for scripture was phenomenal and he could quote pertinent verses as needed. Dennis was a regular attender at Bible study groups where his explanation of original Greek or Hebrew words would bring accurate ideas to any discussion. His beautiful, distinctive voice had the Welsh lilt of his birth, and family background, in Newport Monmouthshire, with overtones of his upbringing and schooling in Gloucester.

As his father¹ left when he was very young Dennis did not remember him. He, and his mother, lived with his grandmother and his Baptist uncle and when he was 11 years old, in 1937, he obtained a place at St Thomas Rich's Grammar School (known to students as Tommy Rich's) in Gloucester. Two years later World War II started. When Dennis left school in 1941 he worked in the Treasurers Department of Gloucestershire County Council². In 1944, when he turned 18 years old, he was 'called up' and, though he had ideas of joining the RAF, he was sent in a different direction. As Dennis himself wrote³: *'The nation and the war effort were still heavily dependent on coal. Many miners had joined the armed forces or transferred to essential war work in factories. The Government made attempts to increase manpower in the mines. . . . The Minister of Labour and National Service, Rt. Hon. Ernest Bevin, introduced a scheme whereby new recruits would be chosen by ballot. On alternate Monday mornings, figures 0 to 9 were drawn from a hat or box in Downing Street. Those recruits whose National Service Registration Certificate number's last digit corresponded to the number drawn were automatically directed to coal mining. . . . The recruits became known as the Bevin Boys.'* (He received his medal in 2008). *'In the Spring of 1944, a small brown envelope marked OHMS arrived with the morning post. On the 15th May, I left home for the first time to arrive at the mining village of Oakdale, Monmouthshire to begin training as a collier. After four weeks, I was sent to the Taff-Merthyr Colliery at Trelewis, South Wales. The mine was 550 yards in depth, and from the bottom of the shaft was a walk of quarter of a mile to the coal-face with a seam of 4' 6" in height.'* Dennis lived with relations and his cousin, Ken Roberts, spoke very movingly about him at Dennis' funeral.

'Two years went by. One morning the Mine Manager, Mr. Jarman M.E. came to inspect underground. His electric handlamp was like a searchlight. He stopped to ask me a few questions: home? school? education? The final question: 'Would you be willing to go to the Treforest School for Mining and make it a career?' My reply was that I had already applied for training for the Christian Ministry. 'Suppose you do not get in?' he said. 'I leave that to Higher Authority.' Next morning at 5.45 am, I went to hand in my numbered metal disc and receive my miners' lamp, which in the 1940s was in the shape of a lighthouse with a handle at the top and very heavy. This time the lampman gave me a cap lamp and a mini oil lamp: 'You're with the Mine Surveyor from

1 David John Monger and Eva Alice Gertrude Maisey married in Newport in 1924.

2 This and other career information from Pam Brown, Hereford Cathedral.

3 Dore Article 31: *The Mine, the Monastery and the Ministry* by Revd. Dennis Monger in the *Newsletter* of The Friends of Dore Abbey...see Dore Articles. Here Dennis' words are in italics.

now on.' A private on one-day, lieutenant the next, but still a National Service Bevin Boy on six pounds (£6) a week. . . I continued my studies in the evenings and was offered a place at theological college and the University of Wales in Cardiff. With six months of National Service remaining, I was released six weeks early so that I could begin the academic year in September.'

1951 was a momentous year for Dennis. Completing his University studies, he was inducted as the Baptist Minister at Magor (1951-1956) and he married a Gloucester girl, Dorothy Gough, at Trinity Baptist Church in Finlay Road, Gloucester. Dennis and Dorothy were very happy together and Dorothy has been described as a lovely lady. The two of them enjoyed visiting places on Dennis' motorbike. They had the sadness of miscarriages and the death of a baby daughter. When they adopted a small son, Terry, he already had a head injury which affected him throughout his life, becoming much worse as he grew older⁴. Eventually he was looked after in a specialist Care Home in the Midlands. They visited him regularly and Dennis continued to do so after Dorothy's death in 1997⁵ until Terry himself died later in the same year.

Dennis became convinced that Ecumenism was a necessity when Dorothy, as a Baptist, was refused Holy Communion by an Anglican Hospital Chaplain. This underwrote his Christian Ministry for the rest of his life. Having transferred to be Baptist Minister in Monmouth (1957-1982), he also responded to an appeal⁶ from the Moravian Church in Brockweir (1961-1991). This Church, follows the precepts of the 15th century reformer Jan Hus. It is now inclusive, welcoming all believers to Holy Communion. The Mongers lived in Brockweir for 5 years, the Moravian Church acknowledging their great debt to him⁷. In 1975 he was consecrated a Presbyterian in the Moravian Church at his own request marking his 14 years work at Brockweir. He also served other Churches in the Wye Valley. In 1982, he was also called to serve the Leominster Congregation of the Moravian Church. He was a member of the Moravian Provincial Synod (1970-1991) and Secretary of the Moravian Inter-Church & Faith & Order Committee, (including Liturgical Revision & Lectionary). He served in the Ecumenical Team Ministry in Mitchel Troy Parish Church for the Church in Wales' Diocese of Monmouth (1972-1982) and was Chaplain for Monmouth Hospital (1970-1982). He also visited the R.C. Sisters of St. Joseph at Llantarnam.

In 1982-1991 he was the Baptist Minister in Ewyas Harold and Pandy and later added Longtown. Indeed, during his ministry he served eleven⁸ Baptist Churches, though not all at the same time. Dennis retired, for the first time, in 1991 but continued his Preaching Ministry by invitation. Dorothy died in 1997 and was buried at Brockweir. As the years passed Dennis missed her more and more. In 1999 he felt called to be ordained as a Deacon in the Church of England, Diocese of Hereford and in 2000 he was ordained a Priest in Dore Abbey. He also served as the Rural Dean for Abbeydore from the 1st October 2000 to 1st January 2002. He retired, yet again, on the 1st January 2004 and was given permission to continue to officiate in the Diocese of Hereford. Dennis always said he had retired several times!

Dennis did much, much more⁹. He enthusiastically supported Free Churches Scripture Exams. (Baptist/Methodist/Congregational). Sunday School Anniversaries were very jolly affairs

4 Pat and Don Davies, and Ken Roberts.

5 Dorothy Monger was buried at Brockweir Moravian Church. Dennis was buried beside her.

6 From a local man concerned that the Moravian Church, the only Church in Brockweir, was closing. As a result Dennis then met Cyril Edwards, the Moravian Minister.

7 See, for example, the website of Brockweir Moravian Church.

8 Information given at Dennis' funeral by the Baptist Minister.

9 Much of this information is recorded in the following Memories of Revd. Dennis Monger.

with lots of singing and Dennis thumping out hymns and choruses on the piano¹⁰. He was a Governor of Monmouth Secondary School (1959-1980) and Manager of Primary & Junior Schools, Monmouth Group (1959-Local Gov. reorg.). He was always a memorable Father Christmas for the children at Ewyas Harold Primary School!¹¹ He visited the old people at Drybridge House Monmouth and Dulas Court. He wrote articles and pamphlets including '*Like a Tree Planted: the Story of Brockweir Moravian Church, 1833-1983*', '*Monmouth Baptist Church, 1818-1968: A Brief History of 150 years*' and a history of Salem Chapel, Longtown & Chapels in the Olchon Valley to commemorate their 150th Anniversary in 1993. His other interests included local history (for which he was a 'mine of information'), rural development, water colour painting, pen-and-ink drawing, reading, gardening and music. He supported the Organ Recitals in Dore Abbey and loved the Choral Evensong sung by Dore's own Abbey Singers. This year they will sing 'for' him rather than 'with' him but it will not be an occasion for sadness but for joy that he may well be hearing them on 'another shore' where he will know every hymn and every canticle. Who knows - he might even be leading the worship there, too¹².

Here, in weeks that see a change of Archbishop of Canterbury and Pope, it is Dennis who will be greatly missed. I leave the last word to him: Dennis was sitting in his car when friends¹³ spoke to him, saying that cousins who had gone to his Baptist Sunday School in Monmouth, though all Methodists, were planning to visit him soon. They talked about the many churches he had served. Dennis said not to be surprised for '*We all worship the same God*'. He smiled, and drove away.....

Dennis' burial: 15th March 2013 at Brockweir Moravian Church - he chose the first three hymns:
- O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness... - Souls of men, why will ye scatter...
- O Thou who camest from above... - I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene...

Dennis' Memorial Service: Dore Abbey, Sat. 4th May, 3 pm, refreshments. Everyone welcome.

DENNIS' ECUMENISM: No Church owned Dennis. He ministered fully in each one. He was as much a Baptist minister when he died as when he was first ordained and when consecrated a Presbyterian. The Moravian Church accepted his orders as valid but he wanted to be fully Moravian as well, which was what led him to be consecrated a Presbyterian and so be entered on the roll of Regular Ministers of the Moravian Church. If the area of need had been, say, Methodist perhaps he might have entered their ministry too. He explained that his Ordination in the Church of England was for him a tool to enable him to serve the people better in an area where there were few Anglican priests and many small churches and communities¹⁴. Dennis found Dore Abbey was a great place to meet and talk to people¹⁵. He was a valued friend to everyone, church-goer and non-church-goer. Just by being himself, Dennis witnessed for Christ to everyone he met.

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10 Sue Holt - see following memories of Dennis.

11 I have a memory that really made Dennis laugh. I had taken 'Father Christmas' to the school in my car. When, later, I collected my small son he announced that it wasn't the real 'Father Christmas'! I thought he had recognised Dennis - but not at all... This 'Father Christmas' had had a little mud on his wellington boots and of course, coming over the roof tops, these boots should really have been spotlessly clean...the logic of a child!

12 Quoted from Tony Hemson's following memories of Dennis.

13 Jenny and Bob Davies.

14 Sarah Groves.

15 Comment by Dennis to Terry Richardson.

Personal Memories of Revd. Dennis Monger

(in no particular order)

From Ian Roberts:

My father went to Dennis' induction service at Monmouth Baptist Church and was impressed with the message Dennis preached which was '*The second coming of Jesus Christ*'. In the early 1960's my older brother and sister started going to the Wyesham Sunday School just up the road which Dennis ran firmly but with fun and enthusiasm. He encouraged my brother to start playing the piano for the hymns and choruses at a young age, something that he has continued to do to this day.

I turned up a few years later, having secretly followed my siblings up the road (I was 4 years old!) and bursting in during the classes. Face to face with an amazed Dennis I turned and ran, but he sent my brother to bring me back. Thereafter I attended the Sunday School regularly till the later 1970's when it wound down. Like everyone else I recall Dennis with great respect, affection, and gratitude.

From John Loebel, Deacon Magor Baptist Church:

We have copies of his ordination/induction service at Magor in 1951 and at Monmouth in 1957.

From Sue Holt:

Dennis carried out the wedding ceremonies for me and my sisters, Lynda and Denise. He also did the dedication ceremonies for my sons and provided the eulogies at Dad's and Mum's funerals. He was minister in the main Monmouth Baptist Church for many years and was involved in founding the Free Church Sunday School in Wyesham. If I remember correctly, the Sunday School started in the main hall of Wyesham Infants School, then we moved to a barn owned by a Mr Roberts on Wyesham Avenue before we moved into a purpose built building behind Lewis' grocery shop on Wyesham Road. I am not sure of the years, but I was a Sunday School teacher in the new Free Church Sunday School building at Wyesham from the age of about 15 until I got married when I was 23 so I guess that building opened about 1961/2, but the original Wyesham Sunday School must have been running earlier than that - perhaps from about 1957? Dennis' wife Dorothy was still alive when he moved to Brockweir but she developed a terrible autoimmune disease (scleroderma) and I think this was why he gave up the full time ministry in Monmouth so that he could care for her. They had an adopted son whose name was Terry.

Dennis was an enthusiastic supporter of the Scripture Exams that were held each year and entered by children from the various free churches (Baptist, Methodist, Congregational) in Monmouth with a celebration ceremony held in one of the churches where the children gaining the highest marks in each group were presented with religious books. He loved his music and our Sunday School Anniversaries were very jolly affairs with lots of singing and Dennis thumping out hymns and choruses on the piano. In fact, we to stop putting flowers on top of the piano for the Sunday School Services as his enthusiastic playing made vases 'wander' towards the edge! I think he was self-taught as I don't remember ever seeing him playing with a music book in front of him. We also used to go to Drybridge House, one of the local old people's homes in Monmouth, and perform the anniversary music for them afterwards as well as those from the Harvest Festivals and the Nine Lessons and Carols Services at other times of the year. He was a Welsh 'pulpit

thumper' minister and his sermons were lively, often humorous and always thought provoking - he certainly did not fit the image of roaring Valley preachers threatening Fire and Brimstone for sinners.

A memory I have of him is when we did a Sunday School/Church sponsored walk across the Severn Bridge in the most horrendous weather. We all went by car to Chepstow and then the intrepid walkers set off across the bridge in torrential rain, singing as they went! As I was one of the support drivers (it must have been about 1968) I don't know how soon the music died out, but when I collected my half dozen or so passengers at the Severn Bridge Services (no such things as seat belt concerns in those days - you just packed as many children into the back seat as would fit) they were all soaked to the skin, but Dennis was still smiling despite the rain dripping off his hat, nose and clothes and with shoes full of water...

From Jenny and Bob Davies:

The leading authority on his time in Brockweir is, of course, Mr. Monger himself! Thirty years ago he wrote a booklet called '*Like a Tree Planted: the Story of Brockweir Moravian Church, 1833-1983*'. I think it may have been re-printed. It outlined the history of Brockweir Moravian Church. It covered the time he spent there but, with characteristic modesty, he played down the part he had played in saving it.

In 1415 a Bohemian theologian, John Hus, was burned at the stake for heresy, having made the mistake of trusting a papal safe conduct. His ideas did not die and the Moravian Church was based on them. By 1517 it already had 400 congregations in Europe. Eventually it spread to Britain and was recognised by an Act of Parliament in 1749. There were soon churches in the West Country, Bristol having a particularly strong congregation. In the 1830s the lower Wye Valley was not the peaceful place that it is today, for there was a lot of industrial activity. Brockweir specialised in shipbuilding and associated trades. It had about 350 inhabitants who had at least 8 taverns for their entertainment but not a single church for their enlightenment. A visiting doctor noticed that the spiritual state of the population was as bad as its health and appealed to the Bristol Moravians for help. They came, preached and laid the foundation stone of a new church in 1832. It flourished for the rest of the century.

By 1900 the industry in the area was falling, as was the population, and the Moravian Church in Brockweir went into a slow decline . By 1961 its members were finding it hard to find the funds to pay their minister. Approaches were made to other local churches for help, but none came. On 14 July 1961 a representative called on Revd. J D Monger, Baptist Minister of Monmouth, to ask for his help in keeping Brockweir open. Within a few days Mr Monger had visited the church and, on his return home, began to make the necessary contacts within his own church to see how to proceed. It took two years for a final agreement to be reached but the church stayed open for services all the time. Finally, on 16 September 1963, a service was held to celebrate the united witness of the Baptists and Moravians in Brockweir. Revd. Monger was too modest to describe the part he had played in all this in his booklet, of course, but it was significant.

While he was minister the Church and Sunday School hall were completely renovated. Conferences were held, with the Revd. Monger leading them. During his time in Brockweir Church membership had doubled. A Brownie pack and Guide Company had been started and there was a flourishing Sunday School and '*its annual contribution to the Christingle Services is eagerly anticipated*'.

The Mongers lived in Brockweir for five years until the pastoral needs of Monmouth called him back but he continued to supervise the work at Brockweir. In 1975 the Revd. Monger was consecrated a Presbyterian in the Moravian Church at a service held in Manchester in recognition of his fourteen years work in the Wye Valley. In 1982 Revd. Monger was called to serve the Leominster Congregation of the Moravian Church; he looked after two Baptist churches as well. Brockweir Church still stands; without the efforts of Dennis Monger it might not have been in existence today. **He really was a remarkable man.**

From Pat and Don Davies:

In 1982 Dennis went to Leominster and looked after two Baptist Churches as well - these churches were Ewyas Harold and Pandy. Glyn James said that it was in 1982, after he and Joyce had been to hear him preach in Monmouth that they invited him to come to Ewyas Harold. Don actually took a Service in the Chapel on the Sunday before Mr Monger started his Ministry in Ewyas Harold and Mr and Mrs Monger were in the congregation. (We lived in Hereford then) Eleven years later when we moved to live in Ewyas Harold, Dennis told Don he could remember that service and that Don preached on 'Amos' and used a plumb-line as an illustration for the children's address! Dennis was also very supportive to young ministers starting out.

Mrs. Monger is buried at Brockweir and it was Denis' wish to go there too. I remember him telling me that when they adopted Terry he had already had a head injury which affected him throughout his life, becoming worse as he grew older and eventually he was looked after in a specialist Care Home in the Midlands. They visited him regularly and Denis continued to do so after his wife died until Terry himself died later.

Dennis was so good at local history himself and was a mine of information. He had a wonderful memory of people places and events. If I mentioned someone from Raglan, where I grew up, he could tell me something about them and their connection with the church when he was in Monmouth, remembering very clearly. I found Dennis' piece about Bevin Boys very interesting. I could almost hear his voice saying the words.

From Glyn and Joyce James:

The local choir of which we were members had been invited to sing at the Harvest Festival in Grosmont Parish Church. Dennis was the special preacher. Chatting to him afterwards, we gathered he was looking for a smaller church to cut back on his commitments. On Oct 19th 1981 we went to Monmouth to see Mr and Mrs Monger and invited them to consider coming to Ewyas Harold Baptist Chapel. The next meeting was at Pandy Baptist Chapel, as they had expressed an interest in sharing the Ministry and so on Nov 6th 1982 the Induction Service of Rev Dennis Monger to Ewyas Harold and Pandy Baptist Churches took place. He continued his Ministry at Brockweir and also added Leominster Moravian Church.

From Tony Hemson:

Dennis was delighted when the installation of the new organ in Dore Abbey led to the August Coffee Concerts. Dennis himself was an organist and loved to hear the instrument being played by experts and celebrities, but it also gave him a subtle opportunity to promote the work and worship that Dore Abbey undertakes.

At the end of each recital - no matter how popular or esoteric the programme had been - he summed up with more or less the same accolade: *'Well, I don't know about you but I've never heard that organ played so well, or heard so many amazing sounds from it!'* - and he went on to thank the recitalist profusely, encouraging yet more deserving applause. Seizing that moment of high approval he would then capture the audience with how the Abbey had been saved from closure, how growing and vital the worship was becoming after many years of low input, how the Friends had encouraged the setting up of concerts, the growing popularity for tourists and visitors, and all the plans and facilities for the future. His love of the Abbey shone through. Then would come the gentle 'kick' of interest – that nobody had paid to come in, but that it would be a jolly good idea to pay to go out! He was so effective and persuasive.

When the Abbey Singers were set up by Howard Seymour, Dennis was particularly enthusiastic that a new standard of choral music could be lifted up in praise. His keenness and support were a great encouragement for the Abbey to have a musical resource drawn from the locality while not diminishing the resources of other churches. While some notable Services were sung, such as for Patronal feasts, at Remembrance-tide, and in Holy Week, Dennis was also the inspiration for having a regular Evensong (1662) on the first Wednesday of the month. He was *always* there, driving in from Longtown no matter what the weather, or the winter temperature inside the building! This small beginning was so important to him; first it was said Evensong, then he suggested to Geoff Hollom about singing a psalm and the canticles congregationally, and gradually it became more like Evensong should be - with an emphasis on 'song' in the eventide.

When I took over the Abbey Singers, after Howard was appointed to Hay-on-Wye, I made a light suggestion to Dennis about the Abbey Singers possibly singing for Choral Evensong in the summer. This was early in 2012 and we decided that we would aim for May, and especially the Queen's Jubilee Week in June. Dennis responded with his utterly characteristic 'suddenly joyous' face saying, *'Ooooh! That would be my heart's desire in this place; what could be better than Choral Evensong sung by the Abbey's own choir?'* And so it was arranged - Dennis singing the Preces and Responses at both the May and June Services. He was so happy that this traditional style of praise had been attained in the setting of his beloved Dore Abbey.

It is in the plans to do the same this year and our expectation was, of course, that Dennis would again be our minister. Alas, he will not be at the presider's desk. We will hope to sing 'for' him rather than 'with' him and, perhaps, it may not be so much the occasion for sadness but for joy that he may well be hearing us on 'another shore' where he will know every hymn and every canticle. Who knows - he might even be leading the worship there, too.

Dennis' Funeral from Sue Holt:

We went to the service at Brockweir last week. It was a wonderful tribute to a remarkable man and the church was absolutely packed. We ended up standing beside the pulpit at the front of the chapel as there was no room left in the entrance area when we arrived at 2.15 pm. There were also many people who were in the school hall beside the chapel as the service was relayed there as well and they said that they could hear everything so didn't feel that they had missed out by not being in the chapel. It was such a shame that it was a dreadfully wet day as the grounds around the chapel and school hall were absolutely saturated and there was lots of mud everywhere which made walking difficult especially if you were elderly or unstable on your feet. One of my memories of Wyesham Free Church Sunday School got a mention by the lady Moravian minister [Revd. Sarah Groves] which pleased us (and some of the other mourners who had also attended the

Sunday School) as without that, a whole sector of Dennis' life would have been omitted.

If Dennis had not gone into the church, he would have been a very astute businessman. With his ability to identify a 'gap in the market' whether it was a church in need of a minister, a new Sunday School, or organised activities for young people such as Campaigners or Girls Brigade, coupled with his determination and enthusiasm to fulfil that need, he was certainly a force to be reckoned with. Listening to the tributes describing all that he had done in his life, made me think that the person who coined the phrase '*If you want something done, ask a busy man*' had obviously met Dennis!

From Sarah Groves:

I loved reading your article – it told me things I did not know and explained things I did know about Dennis – I knew him best when he was still in ministerial charge at Brockweir so he would be at Brockweir then rushing off to preach etc. or just go home at the end of a long day. I remember coming to Dore Abbey with Dennis and his real joy in the place – as his cousin Ken said – '*Dennis never stopped opening Churches for people*'.

Revd. Sarah Groves' funeral eulogy:

This is an expression of thanks, in the presence of God and of my brothers and sisters in Christ, to a man who gave his life to following Christ and serving his people. And I know that my words and reflections will be echoed by so many people. This service is here in Brockweir but it could have been held in any of the churches or chapels that he served so faithfully in his long ministry in this area and the words of thanks that I will give could be spoken by so many others, Moravian, Anglicans and Baptists, Welsh or English.

On Sir Christopher Wren's memorial in St Paul's Cathedral reads – Reader if you seek his monument – look around you. And the same is true here – Dennis' grave might be marked with a stone in due course but his real monument is here, in this place and in all the chapels he served and in all the hearts and lives he touched. You see this Church, beautifully decorated and with an active congregation and ecumenical worship offered to God every Sunday. Well it wasn't always like this – I have brought with me photos of what the Church here looked like in the early 60's - it looks so sad despite the sprigs of Jasmine and daffodils in the vases. The decision was made to close this place of worship in July 1956 – it was an isolated community and ministry was hard to maintain here, the cost of keeping the building up and the reluctance of people to take on responsibility was taking its toll. So Brother Cyril Edwards – a dear and godly man himself, was to be the last minister in this place. Electricity came to the village but bypassed the Church Manse and School Room as there was no point in putting it in. Valuers came and looked at the property for sale, the Anglicans and the Pentecostals were approached but no one wanted to take on the church and maintain worship here. But there were signs of life in the congregation and Br. Edwards had written in the Church diary that 'Faith would win the day'. However the Church was due to close in July 1961. Faith did win the day – at the last moment! An approach was made to a certain young Baptist Minister in Monmouth on 14th July and Mr Monger acted immediately coming to visit Br. Edwards before he left and contacting both the Moravian authorities and the Baptist Union. They both responded with a wonderful ecumenical spirit and pastoral oversight passed to Mr Monger upon the departure of Br. Cyril later that month.

Two years of talks brought a wonderful union between the two denominations and in 1963,

with all the discussions completed the Church was filled for a Service of Union to establish the united witness of the Baptist and Moravian denominations in this place. So much work had to be done here – new roofs, and complete renovations – and in 1965 Mr and Mrs Monger moved into the Manse to build up the work here – they started a small Christian conference centre here and many groups came to down to Brockweir to stay. But Mr Monger was not just responsible for Brockweir – his main Church was Monmouth Baptist Church and we owe a huge debt of gratitude to them for the time they gave him to look after all the other Churches in his group. We were part of the Monmouth Group of Baptist Churches, along with Penault, Norton, Llandogo and Calcoid and we gained so much from them. We shared in the local Scripture exams and we benefited from the wonderful band of Baptist Lay Preachers who would faithfully help fill our pulpit on the weeks when Mr Monger was not here. We were enriched beyond measure by this local fellowship. The whole group was held together by Mr Monger's example and preaching and by his wonderful Church newsletter – '*The Record*'. It was the only way to keep track of where he was week by week. He hated taking on any engagements during the last week of each month because that was when he typed it all, duplicated it and with volunteer help collated and photocopied it. I did not know until the other day that his life long love of desktop publishing a magazine called '*The Record*' began in Ebenezer Baptist Church in Magor in 1949.

It was during Mr Monger's time in Brockweir that the congregation got to know Dorothy, his beloved wife and Terry, their son. Terry was well during his time here and fitted in with all the other young people in the village so there are very fond memories of him and we all loved Dorothy, her kindness, sense of humour and great wisdom. I believe that his great passion for ecumenism came partly out of a dreadful grief – Dorothy was in hospital following the still birth of their child and the Anglican priest came by with Holy Communion but would not serve Dorothy because she was not an Anglican – this would have caused such bitterness in a lesser couple but for them it gave them a reason to break down the barriers that separate the people of God.

Mr Monger's preaching was so appreciated – as a young person I loved looking up at him in the pulpit with his gown on and the light casting a shadow behind him and hearing the *hwyl* in his preaching – and sometimes his bible would come crashing down! But he was so gentle as a pastoral visitor and every pastoral visit would end, as it should, with a prayer. There wasn't a hospital he wouldn't, or couldn't, visit and he had the knack of just dropping in for a short while but making every moment count. His commitment as Pastor to his flock was such that he would never go far away for his holidays, it had to be somewhere with a phone so that he could be reached if he was needed and return quickly.

He truly was a scholarly pastor too who never stopped studying and sharing the benefits of his study with others. A generous bequest enabled he and Dorothy to go to the Holy Land and that so enriched his preaching. He kept up with all the issues in theology and society and used to say he had two ears to listen and only one mouth to speak. He wrote the history of our Church '*Like a Tree Planted*' and he was a very popular contributor to our denominational magazine, the Moravian Messenger – in fact the latest issue came out on Sunday 3rd with his overview of the Third Epistle of John – and he was called home on the Monday – the last words of the article ends with 'the hope of meeting face to face' – and now Dennis is face to face with the God who made him and loves him.

So many people have reason to be thankful to God for Dennis' ministry with children and young people, he had a youth fellowship in the manse here at Brockweir and he was a passionate worker with the Scripture Exams, the Wyesham Free Church Sunday School, and with the Campaigners – I have read some wonderful memories from Sue Holt at Wyesham and Bryan

Cotterall from Monmouth Baptist Campaigners and I have them with me if others want to read them. Sue said he used to thump out hymns and choruses on the piano – and that brought back so many memories for me of him playing by ear with a real roll and tinkle in the music.

Mr Monger's ministry covered so many events – the restoration of our Church, his consecration as a Moravian Presbyter, the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of our Church here – its jubilee as he loved to call it, he stayed our minister even when he moved from Monmouth to Ewyas Harold and Pandy – and from there he also took on the work of Moravian Minister at Leominster. He retired in 1991 after 40 years of faithful ministry but that did not stop his continuing support of the church here – his regular trips down to take services, in latter years in the summer months not in the deep of winter. His first service for 2013 was to have been for the Maundy Thursday Communion Service! He married so many folk here, he baptised our children, he buried our beloved dead – he sustained us in the breaking of the word and in the breaking of the bread for so many years. He was loved and respected across the Moravian Church as a good man and an exemplar for ministry. He was elected to the highest honour our Church can give- the *Advocatus Fratrum* in Anglia and when he spoke at Synod – which he did sparingly it was always to a quiet hall who wanted to hear what he had to say – so many people have contacted me and said how much he meant to them.

On top of all that he was such a warm human man – and we all have such good memories of him. One year Chris and I made home made elderflower champagne – as you may know it is one of the most beautiful drinks and is virtually non alcoholic – it just needs a bit of carbon dioxide to give it the fizz. So we made some for Dennis and Dorothy and he took it home rather reluctantly despite our protestations that it really wasn't alcoholic. But of course he didn't drink it because he feared the worst – and it was a hot summer – the inevitable happened – the bottles burst in his study scattering glass and elderflower champagne all over his books. He was convinced that we had tried to give him something seriously alcoholic and we never made elderflower champagne again!

When I announced his death in our congregation in Gracehill in Northern Ireland one of the older ladies told me of when he had come to stay with her and her husband for one Synod in Northern Ireland. Br. and Sr. O'Neill had a large house and were putting up two guests for Synod – Dennis and a lady called Janet – over the evening they chatted by the fire and Janet headed for bed – about 10 minutes later Dennis said '*I think I'll go and join Janet now*' – '*I don't think you ought to*' came back the reply from the rather shocked Br. O'Neill. And Dennis just lifted his hands and legs and roared and roared with laughter when he realised what he had said.

I want to close with a passage of scripture that means so much to us in the Moravian Church - it is used in our liturgy for Holy Communion and in our funeral liturgy – from Hebrews 12 verse 1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Dennis ran the race Christ called him to – he ran it as a Preacher – opening scripture for his people and feeding them with the living word; he ran it as a Pastor – tending and serving his flock what ever the personal cost to him; he ran the race as a Priest – breaking the bread and sharing the wine for the scattered flock of these border valleys. Those of us who are priests, pastors and preachers should be inspired by his example to follow our Lord with renewed heart and commitment. But greatest of all Dennis was a Christian man who kept his eyes fixed on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith – he knew about the Cross and its pain – but following his Lord, Dennis knew he was forgiven, accepted and would be called home to be with

his Lord and he wanted nothing more than for others to know that love, forgiveness acceptance and fellowship in Christ. So for us the greatest tribute and thanks we can give, to this humble man who gave us so much, is to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and share that faith and hope with those around us. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit - Amen

From Revd. Ashley Evans:

Dennis was able to lead worship at Walterstone Church and at the Baptist Chapel in Longtown on Sunday [the day he died], and so was able to continue exercising his ministry right up to the end just as he would have wished.

Revd. Ashley Evans included a message from the Bishop of Hereford in his eulogy:

Bishop Anthony is very sorry not to be able to be at Dennis' funeral, due to a longstanding engagement, and has asked that the following message be read out:

Dennis was a holy man of God: greatly loved, hugely respected, a wonderful disciple, witness and servant. He has been outstanding in the love and care that he has shown to so very many people, both as a priest in the Church of England and our Diocese of Hereford, and previously as a Baptist and Moravian minister. He was a great encourager and always left you feeling better and closer to God. We shall all miss him hugely, but are the better for having known him. We hope and pray that he will now meet ,beyond death, the God whom he has loved and served throughout his life and know the fullness of that love and glory.

[Bishop John Oliver, the (Anglican) Bishop of Hereford, who ordained Dennis was present at Dennis' funeral with his wife and son. He will preach at Dennis' Memorial in Dore Abbey.]

From Pam Brown:

I never met Revd. Monger but it sounds like God knew what he was doing when he let him 'get in'.

From Lynda Cecil and Brian Wells:

It could be said of Dennis - to transcribe Geoffrey Chaucer's Prologue to the 'Canterbury Tales' - *'...almost beyond price was his prestige. Though eminent, he was prudent and sage. And in his bearing as mild as any maid. He'd never been foul spoken in his life to any kind of man: he was indeed the very pattern of a noble knight.'*

To read Dennis' Dore Article please click [here](#).

A small selection from the many photographs of Revd. Dennis Monger follows this appreciation. Please use the contact page for comments, or if you would like to know of any other photographs.